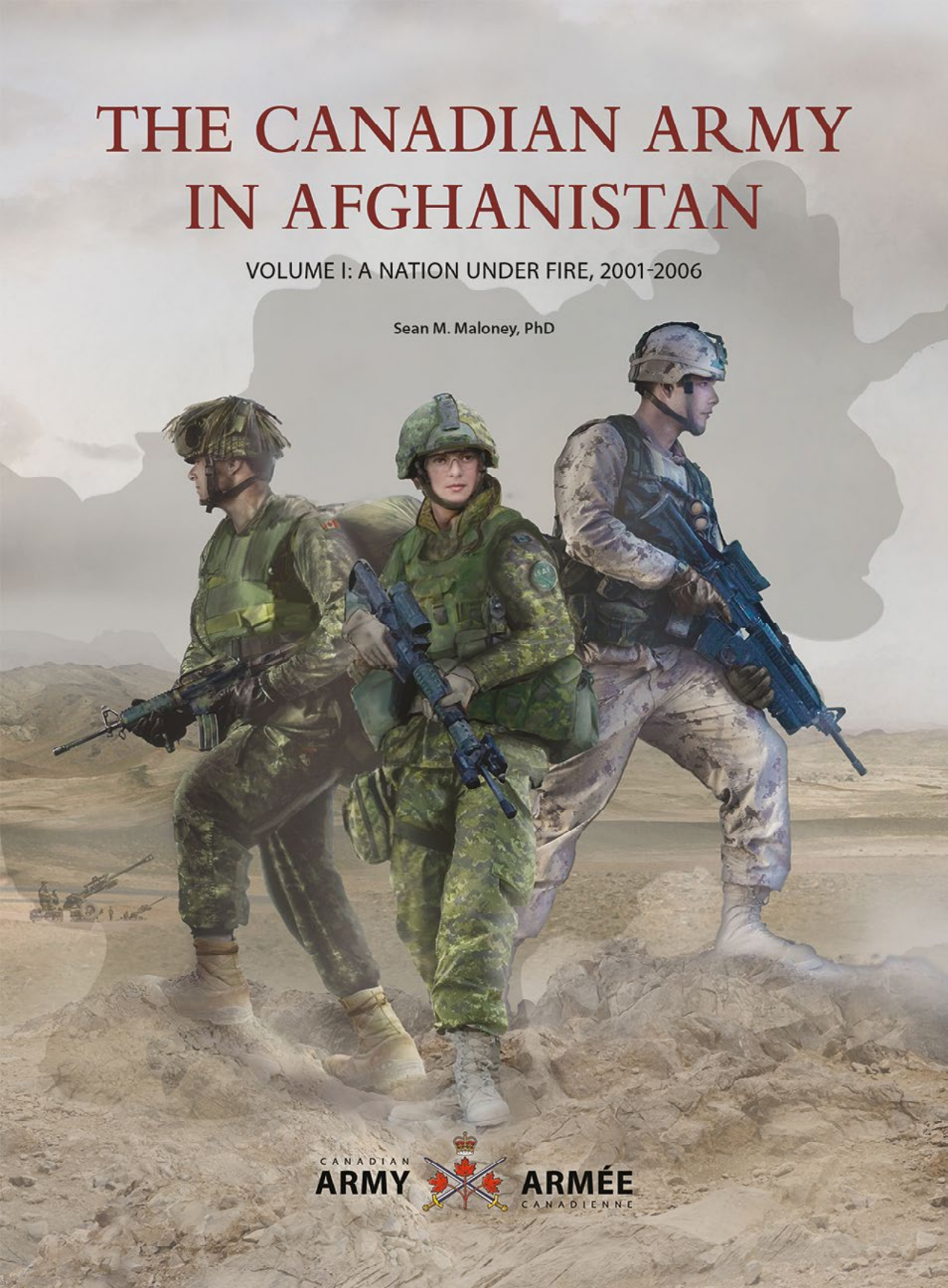
THE CANADIAN ARMY IN AFGHANISTAN

VOLUME I: A NATION UNDER FIRE, 2001-2006

Sean M. Maloney, PhD



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FOREWORD

The first time I met Dr. Sean Maloney I was worried. It was late April 2011, and the whole weight of having one of Canada's pre-eminent military historians riding in my Light Armoured Vehicle (LAV III) and touring the district of Panjwai was bearing on me. Having taken graduate military history classes at the University of New Brunswick under Dr. Charters, Dr. Milner and Dr. Windsor in the late 90s, I had read Dr. Maloney's work on Canada's contribution to NATO, the conflict in the Balkans, peacekeeping and the Cold War. He was (and is) a larger than life persona, replete with knowledge gained from having focused his field of study on the conflict in Afghanistan for a period in the early 2000s; I was filled with trepidation as we embarked on our first battlefield circulation together.

But before I get ahead of myself, I have to admit that it is with humility and with the sense of the thousands of soldiers, special forces operators, aviators and sailors that served in Afghanistan that I write the foreword to this trilogy of books that covers the Canadian Army's involvement in Afghanistan during the combat period of 2001 to 2011. As the Acting Commander of the Canadian Army, it falls on me to lead you into this journey. As such, I am thankful for having spent time with Dr. Maloney in Afghanistan, and most recently in his home in Harrowsmith, Ontario, in November 2021. We talked about our involvement in Afghanistan ten years ago, through the current lens of what transpired in that country in the months of June, July and August 2021. The way the country fell to the Taliban weighs heavily on veterans, families, current serving members, public servants, journalists that covered the conflict, and historians. More importantly, it has victimized another generation of Afghans.

But this is not the point of these books. By reading this history, talking to teammates, and spending hours listening to the author, I have been able to put the history of those deployments in their context. It has also given me enough strength to write these words—words that I hope will incite you to tackle this multi-volume history of what was done on the ground in Afghanistan during those years. Dr. Maloney brings an informed and passionate perspective to the events. First, because he was constantly there; he regularly travelled to the theatre during those 10 years, talked to leaders, to soldiers, to Afghans, even to the enemy. He knew the players, the issues and the stakes. Second, because his work is based on interviews with all the key personnel and a keen sense of the arc of history. Lastly, because it is a vital contribution to our body of knowledge on this conflict and our contribution as a nation.

Some would say that a lot has been written on the subject, but I would disagree. Most of the literature written in English is from an American or British perspective. The Canadian angle is covered in our own limited literature by firsthand accounts written by soldiers and officers who lived the deployments, journalists who put their coverage under the larger perspective of the mission in Afghanistan, and in the words of loved ones, families and friends of those who served, who in turn have added their reflections to the mosaic of our recorded thoughts and deeds. There have been contributions to the Canadian experience from social scientists and foreign relations experts, but none that resemble this work. This monumental three-volume study is as close as we are to an official history, but also as admitted by the author in his own preamble, this is not the "final word on the Army's involvement in Afghanistan". It is what currently stands as the only and best attempt to place the ten years of combat operations in an accurate and chronological narrative. It strives to put in order our actions in Afghanistan from September 2001 to July 2011. It is a source to be consulted and considered when future generations study our contribution. More importantly, it provides a concrete foundation and an informed alignment of facts for future study. But for a soldier like me, and thousands of others who served in Afghanistan, and who still carry some of the visible and invisible scars of that service, this work brings back many memories.

A voyage that forces us to face the question: Was this worth it? The answer to this question is very personal. It will change through the lens of time, current events and from one person to the other. But to the veterans and their families, I submit that for me the answer remains: yes. It was worth it because the story on these pages shows that the situation in Kandahar province was very precarious in 2005-2006, and in the words of a previous Army Commander, LGen Devlin, "we held the line". It was worth it because the provinces where we operated saw improvements during the time of Canada's combat mission. It was worth it because, just like it has through its history, it showed that Canada was a capable and trusted military partner when the NATO Alliance invoked Article 5. It was worth it because I am convinced that the soldiers we lost would believe that it was. While this sentiment will not be shared by all, the stories in these pages show the sacrifice, the toll, but also the innovation shown by troops on the ground. Through these pages you will travel through Afghanistan: from Kabul to Kandahar, from Spin Boldak to Maywand, from Panjwai to Arghandab, and beyond. We served where we were needed across Afghanistan, whether in an assigned locality, or elsewhere in support of our partners and allies. You will be forced to revisit the losses we incurred, but you will also learn that we answered the call, made a difference, and for that the nation can be proud.

As I reflect back on why I was worried to be patrolling Panjwai with Dr. Maloney in the back of my LAV III—he chatting to me on the vehicle intercom—it is because I was keenly aware that the Roto 10 Battle-Group was writing the last chapter of these books. We were the last rotation involved in combat operations, and we were there at the very early stages of the last Afghan summer fighting season on behalf of Canada. We had been hard at work over the last five months flooding our zone with Afghan and Coalition combat power, pushing the enemy out of our district and taking away the materiel and safe havens he needed to conduct operations. Building on the success of the previous rotations, we had finally had the benefit of overwhelming forces compounded by the ability to focus on a single district. This gave us a chance. But as always, the enemy had a vote, and now I had a historian in my vehicle. I knew he had seen every previous rotation, he knew some of the challenges previous Canadian Army units had faced, and was a wealth of knowledge to our team, but he was there and we were unsure how the months of May, June and July would play out as we completed this chapter of Canadian military history. If you don't know how this story ends, I will let you read that in the last pages of the third book, but for now I encourage you to embark on this journey. See through these books, the work, the actions, the successes, but also the trials and heartbreak of a generation of Canadian soldiers.

Thank you Sean for your passion, your perspective and your contribution to the telling of the story of the Canadian Army in Afghanistan.

Vigilamus pro te

Je me souviens

Michel-Henri St-Louis, OMM, MSC, MSM, CD
Acting Commander Canadian Army, and previously,
Commander of the last Battle-Group in Panjwai

17 December 2021,
Kingston, Ontario

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 2007, Chief of the Land Staff Lieutenant-General Andrew Leslie asked me to ensure that the Army's historical record in Afghanistan was collected, written, and published. Since I had already traveled to Afghanistan on several occasions in support of a variety of Canadian activities, and my interest in and dedication to understanding the complex Afghan scene was known, I was then reassigned from the Royal Military College to the Chief of the Land Staff to carry out these tasks. Without his vision this project would not have existed. Lieutenant-General Peter Devlin maintained his support once Lieutenant-General Leslie departed. After a period of imposed delay, Chief of Defence Staff General Jon Vance and Canadian Army Commander Lieutenant-General Wayne Eyre confirmed that the project would be completed. I would like to thank them all for providing the leadership, the will, and the resources to do so.

The nature and extent of the history grew over time and necessitated that I have an assistant. Major Marta Rzechowka proved to be resilient, effective, highly motivated and, most importantly, loyal over the years. She is greatly deserving of thanks, as are Major-General Derek Macaulay and Lieutenant Colonel Douglas McNair, without whose efforts this history would have remained in limbo. I wish also to recognize the assistance of members of the Land, later Army, staff.

The Ottawa bureaucratic environment is not one I usually operate in. It has its own special codes, language, and expectations. In some cases, these competed with the timely and effective completion of this history. I am indebted to a number of people who understood the importance of having the Army's history in Afghanistan written and published, and to those who assisted me in this particular parallel campaign. I would like to thank Dr. Joel Sokolsky, Major-General Alan Howard, Brigadier-General David Anderson, Brigadier-General Christian Drouin, Brigadier-General Simon Hetherington, Brigadier-General Mike Rouleau, Colonel Ian Hope, Colonel Roger Cotton, Colonel Mike St Louis, Lieutenant-Colonel Steve Graham, Lieutenant-Colonel Vincent Giroux, Lieutenant-Colonel Chris Adams, Major Chris Comeau, Major Jim Fitzgerald, Major Brian Hynes and Major Steven Moritsugu (contemporary ranks).

Over the years and on several rotations, I could always rely on Major Quentin Innis for challenging debates over the nature of what was later labelled "white situational awareness." Quentin's out-of-the-box approach to Afghanistan (and life) was as steadfast as his commitment to the Canadian mission and the Afghan people.

Likewise, thank you to Renata Pistone, Christina Green, Andrew Scyner, and Michael Callan from the Canadian International Development Agency, and Chris Alexander, Pam Isfeld, Jennie Chen, Ken Lewis, Barbara Martin, Gavin Buchan, and Neil Clegg from the (former) Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The criticisms I levelled at their parent organizations herein do not apply to them.

It is easy to fall into a perspective problem when drafting such a detailed manuscript. I asked a number of colleagues with differing areas of expertise to read the work and provide me with feedback. Dr. David Last, a political scientist at the Royal Military College of Canada, was one representation of a polar opposite political and methodological outlook to mine. Michael Whitby, a veteran of writing the official Royal Canadian Navy histories at the Directorate of History and Heritage was another. Major Sean Wyatt, a well-read, highly experienced officer was the third. Finally, Dr. Kim Nossal at the Queen's School for Policy Studies also provided his experienced views. Their insights and arguments have been most valuable.

On par with these informal reviews was the operational security review undertaken by Major Gordon Ohlke with the concurrence of the Chief of Defence Intelligence. Major Ohlke's experiences as an intelligence officer in, and dealing with, Afghanistan proved especially valuable time and again.

Over the years, I have also relied on the wise counsel of Les Grau from the Foreign Military Studies Office at Fort Leavenworth. Les, a veteran of Vietnam as well as United States Army bureaucracy, is the preeminent United States Army expert on Afghanistan, but also has an instinctive understanding of the human dimensions of counterinsurgency war, which I drew on time and again.

I traveled to Afghanistan on numerous occasions between 2003 and 2014 to observe operations and provide advice. The ability to closely observe and participate in operations contributed immeasurably to this history. In the early days, the then-Major-General Michel Maisonneuve, Director General Strategic Plans, and then-Major-General Andrew Leslie, acting Vice Chief of the Defence Staff and the Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff were the primary sponsoring agencies and saw the value of my analysis of what was going on in Afghanistan. Once the Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command was up and running, its Commander, Lieutenant-General Michel Gauthier, approved my in-theatre deployments on a regular basis and his staff staved off elements attempting to interfere with these movements.

It is impossible to thank everyone who contributed to my understanding of the environment in Afghanistan and operations within it. Nevertheless, I would like to thank all of the junior officers and soldiers that I accompanied on combat operations over the years at the tactical level. At no time in the field did I feel I was dealing with anything less

than professional and exceptionally competent people. I would especially like to reciprocate the trust they put in me and give context to what they were doing. Second, all of the unit commanding officers, deputy commanding officers, and staffs played a role in assisting me with this history in one way or another. There is simply not enough space here to thank everyone personally but those who assisted me have my respect and deepest gratitude.

I would also like to thank the Canadian staff at Regional Command (South) over the years, particularly Major-General David Fraser, Lieutenant-General Marc Lessard, Lieutenant-General Marquis Hainse, Brigadier-General André Corbould, Colonel Spike Hazleton, Colonel René Melançon, Colonel Tim Bishop, Lieutenant-Colonel Shane Schreiber, Lieutenant-Colonel Harjit Sajjan, Major Julie Roberge, and Captain Darcy Heddon-Chalmers.

The Joint Task Force-Afghanistan Headquarters commanders all played a role in assisting with this history. Thank you to Major-General Tim Grant, Brigadier-General Guy Laroche, Major-General Denis Thompson, General Jon Vance, and Major-General Dean Milner. I should also mention that although they rarely get mentioned in any capacity, the deputy commanders of Joint Task Force-Afghanistan Headquarters played a key role in assisting me in various ways and means. Thank you to Colonel Christian Juneau, Colonel Roch Lacroix, Brigadier-General Richard Giguère and especially Colonel Jamie Cade for his insights over the years.

For a number of years, I had a special relationship with the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kandahar. For that, I would like to thank Lieutenant-General Steve Bowes, Colonel Bob Chamberlain, Lieutenant-Colonel Dana Woodworth, their staffs, and particularly the force protection companies on those rotations. In later years, Bill Harris from the United States Department of State was a particularly valued interlocutor. I would be remiss if I did not especially thank the commanding officers of the Strategic Advisory Team Afghanistan, particularly Colonel Mike Capstick, Colonel Don Dixon, Brigadier-General Serge Labbé, and all of their personnel. The hospitality and insight provided was critical in understanding the bigger picture.

It is equally crucial that I acknowledge all of the interpreters whom I worked with over the years. Again, there are too many people to thank individually and in many cases, we used *noms de guerre* for operational security reasons, so I will collectively thank them as they played a significant and sometimes dramatic role in helping to understand the Afghanistan environment – Canada is indebted to each of them. Similarly, my contacts within the Kandahari power structure must remain anonymous, but their insights and even their attempts at manipulating my perceptions proved extremely useful.

In addition to all of the Canadian battle group commanders and company and squadron commanders, I would like to thank some of our allies: Colonel Chris Vernon, United Kingdom Army; Colonel Trey Turner, United States Air Force; Lieutenant Colonel Dan Hurlbut, 2-2 Infantry; Lieutenant Colonel James Benson, 4-101st Aviation Regiment; and particularly Lieutenant Colonel Johnny Bourne, 1st Battalion, Royal Gurkha Rifles, as well as Major Randy Graddic, United States Army.

There were innumerable people in the Canadian and allied intelligence and special operations forces communities who assisted year in, year out. They cannot be named in this forum but I thank them nonetheless.

Thank you also to the support staff at the Directorate of Land Combat Development who handled our administrative support for a number of years: Shaunna Lee, Petty Officer 2nd Class Andria Coward and Corporal Kirby Dickson.

I would be gravely remiss if I did not profusely thank Brian Rogers and Steven Lukits for providing invaluable legal support regarding this project.

Finally, to Mullah Omar and his supporters, as well as those who facilitated the activities of the suicide bomber that destroyed my vehicle, wounded two Canadians, and murdered nine Afghan men, women and children on 21 June 2006, the evil that he and his colleagues perpetrated that day gave me the resolve to see this project through to the end. Our successful attempts to thwart their inhuman objectives and assist the Afghan people are now permanently recorded in our history and in the history of Afghanistan. Our implementation may have been problematic, the outcome may be less than desired, but our cause was just. As the good book says:

"Allah loves those who act justly."

(Surat al-Maida, 42)

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A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

God send me to see suche a company together agayne when need is.

- Lord Howard of Effingham.

He did and it was.

The Canadian Army in Afghanistan was written immediately after the completion of Canadian Army combat operations in Afghanistan in July 2011. The close proximity of this history to the events depicted herein will undoubtedly raise questions relating to the nature of history, objective distance, and the personal involvement of the author in the conflict. My response is that history will always be a moving target subjected to the Rashomon Effect, and there will be constant ideological interpretation and reinterpretation of events and decisions given contemporary political pressures and other factors, many of them personal.

There are different types of history. This is only one of them. An overview cannot hope to capture every aspect of the conflict. To achieve that aim, a variety of works are required including personal memoirs, tactical narratives, and technical and organizational history. That said, *The Canadian Army in Afghanistan* is not intended to be the final word on the Army's involvement in Afghanistan. By necessity, some things must be compressed because of space, time, and readability. Given the nature of the conflict as well as the classified and technical nature of many Canadian successes, and with many misconceptions extant in the public domain, it is crucial that an accurate chronology of events and an initial narrative be written to capture what happened, based on what is known now.

I fully expect that this depiction of the events that occurred between 2001 to 2011 will be challenged and fully expect successors to produce other works, in due course, with perhaps better information or through the creation of a new lens from which to view the same data. Someone, however, has to initiate that process so we can learn from the Canadian Army's experiences. The dialogue and debates on the contents of these volumes must continue. The Canadian Army's involvement in this conflict has many nuances that should not be lost over time or to expediency. There is a lot to learn, but only if we are able, as Canadians, to unflinchingly look the Afghanistan experience in the face and assess what was accomplished, what was not, and why. That was the task given to me by the Chief of the Land Staff, with the approval of the Chief of Defence Staff, in 2007.

A no less important aspect of this project is its unapologetic Canadian outlook. The existing literature in the United States and in the United Kingdom dealing with the war in Afghanistan has, thus far, virtually written Canada out of history. Worse, American or British failures are now assumed to be Canadian failures as well. Where Canada or the Canadian Army is mentioned, it is cursory in nature, derisive in tone, or both. The bulk of the non-Canadian literature does not give Canadian soldiers their just due in any respect whatsoever. Given what Canadians accomplished and sacrificed during the course of the conflict, this is unconscionable, though understandable – it is not a new phenomenon. As a mature nation, however, we must take responsibility for our own history. We need to stop relying on what others think, feel, or believe as the basis of what we, as Canadians, should think, feel, and believe. Those who asked me to undertake this project understood this problem.

The Canadian Army in Afghanistan benefitted from access to a wide variety of primary sources, access to the battle space while operations were in progress, and access to participants both during and after operations. Indeed, greater than 95% of the text of both volumes is based on primary sources. If I may quote Charles Stacey's preface from *Six Years of War*:

> It may be noted that many of the documents referred to are still 'classified', and the fact that they are cited does not necessarily imply that they are available for public examination. In spite of this, it has been thought best to give the references, since a documented narrative carries more weight than an undocumented one even when the sources cannot be produced; and many of the classified documents cited will presumably become available to students in due course.[1]

That said, the interpretation of events is the responsibility of the author and these volumes in no way reflect any official opinion, nor would I want them to. Again, those who asked me to undertake this project asked me to produce it with as few institutional constraints as possible. This generated considerable friction with those who ignored their intent later. These volumes now adhere to the original mandate.

Additionally, I have employed a highly modified and extremely simplified North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) symbology for the map sketches in these volumes to make them more accessible to a broader audience as existing systems proved too cumbersome and threatened to overwhelm the reader.

This project was undertaken in good faith. I would strongly encourage those who participated in the war in Afghanistan to put their experiences and thoughts on paper, particularly if they expand, enhance, correct, or even contradict, anything contained in these volumes. History is, and will always be, a multi-faceted diamond. *The Canadian Army in Afghanistan* is merely the first cut.

ENDNOTE

1. C.P. Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War, Volume I: Six Years of War: The Canadian Army in Canada, Britain, and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen's Printers, 1955), pp. xi-xii.

INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Army's involvement in Afghanistan after the 11 September attacks of 2001 was as dramatic as it was historically significant. The conflict in Afghanistan was Canada's first major shooting war since Korea in the 1950s and was also the first long term counterinsurgency campaign undertaken by not only the Army, but the Government of Canada. Acts of valour by Canadian men and women, not seen outside of the pages of Second World War history books, once again became commonplace. The war in Afghanistan reminded Canadians that the peacekeeping paradigm, which for so long dominated the Canadian worldview, reflected an earlier, even mythological, golden age. Canada was now up against a new type of enemy, global in scope, agile and adaptable. This enemy retained sweeping goals that apparently had the sanction of a higher power. Those goals were coupled with the ability to draw on seemingly unlimited manpower. In some ways our new enemy was similar to those totalitarians we had dealt with in the past. The enemy was led by men who were determined to impose their extreme worldview on others using violence. We, as Canadians, chose not to accept this worldview as it conflicted with our system of values and our global interests. A diplomatic compromise with such men was not possible and military action was the only appropriate response given the magnitude of this new challenge.

Among 3000 others, 25 Canadians were killed in the 9/11 attacks by Al Qaeda, an organization that hid behind a shield provided by the Pakistan-supported Taliban movement in Afghanistan. That movement conquered and subjugated parts of Afghanistan, and then permitted Al Qaeda planning cells, communications, training facilities and bio-chemical laboratories to expand on Afghan soil. Such entities could not be confronted using traditional Canadian international affairs methodology; who or what was there to negotiate with, given that the Taliban regime was not a recognized, legitimate government? Should Canadians have seriously discussed the dismantling of our political, religious and economic systems to satisfy self-appointed "commanders of the faithful" like Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri? Should we have caved in to their threats in order to prevent more loss of life? These notions were as absurd as they were unrealistic.

It was evident that the United States, the most aggrieved target of the attacks and the most militarily capable, would take the lead in going after the perpetrators. Canadian foreign affairs specialists, including many people who laboured for most of their careers to differentiate and distance Canada from the United States, now had to alter course as Canadian and American interests converged over Afghanistan. At the same time, Canada's

military contribution had to remain distinct and salient. Those tensions would resonate in Canadian circles over the next decade, as the level of Canadian Army involvement was determined in Ottawa while operations were carried out in the field.

During those debates, wherein levels of commitment were discussed in back rooms and sometimes in the media sphere, it was easy to lose track of the original objectives and intent of Canada's involvement in Afghanistan. First, the larger, globalized Al Qaeda threat had to be understood and confronted. This necessitated the removal of the Taliban regime that shielded it. Subsequent to that, an assessment of Al Qaeda's strategic reach had to be undertaken in the ruins of its training centres and bio-chemical laboratories situated in Afghanistan. In theory, that information would allow for coalition action on a global scale to counter the various projects already put in motion by that organization. Al Qaeda would be disrupted, forced to re-locate, and start again but this time with eyes watching out for its deadly activities.

Then there was Afghanistan itself. Renewed fighting among various factions had to be avoided. Some form of governance had to be established before the international community would invest in reconstruction efforts.

All of these incremental, painstaking efforts had to be shielded from renewed attempts by the former regime and its allies to re-establish themselves in the country. Collaterally protecting the strategic success of the removal of the Taliban regime, as it manifested itself throughout the global media sphere, became critical, particularly because the audience included millions of potential future adversaries. Al Qaeda sought to reverse this major defeat and, as a result, accelerated efforts to demonstrate success to its global audience. This acceleration occurred even though and perhaps because Al Qaeda was being defeated on another front in Iraq, countered in Somalia, challenged in the Philippines, and thwarted in its repeated attempts to hijack or destroy civilian airliners throughout the world.

By comparison, the coalition reconstruction effort in Afghanistan was a tempting collection of fragile targets. There were plenty of aggrieved potential enemy allies, including a revitalized Taliban movement, who could be employed as proxies in such a fight. Afghanistan was one front in Al Qaeda's war, while it became the only front left for a renewed Taliban and their Afghan and Pakistani allies.

As the war progressed, it was increasingly evident that the threat to the reconstruction effort was multifaceted. It was no longer "The Taliban," supported by Al Qaeda, versus "The Coalition." A variety of elements - what historian David C. Isby calls "The Vortex" – diluted the ideological purity, if it ever really existed, of Mullah Omar's Taliban movement. Narcotics producers, narcotics transporters, Islamist non-governmental organizations, Islamist elements in the various Pakistani intelligence and security services, financiers, trucking mafias, individual jihadists from all over the world, plus a variety of commercial

interests all joined or profited from the fight. Some of these elements even overlapped or became intertwined with elements in the emergent Afghan government. What started off as a straightforward, good-versus-evil adversarial fight ended up as something much murkier. It gave the Canadian Army, Canadian citizens and their leaders an education on the functioning of the rest of the world outside of North America, and on the limits of the supposedly traditional Canadian "peacekeeping" worldview.

The various Canadian Army commitments to Afghanistan over a 10-year period fit within a particular strategic framework. One can debate the specifics of how each commitment was reached, or how much continuity there was between commitments although there was a near-continuous presence of the Canadian Army in Afghanistan for 12 years. Fundamentally, however, there were eight discrete periods of involvement from 2001 to 2014:

2001–2002 The removal of the Taliban regime and strategic intelligence exploitation efforts versus Al Qaeda through Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.

2003–2004 The stabilization of Kabul and the prevention of a renewed civil war through the medium of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

2005 Initial efforts to identify problems in and stabilize Kandahar Province.

2006 The defence of Kandahar City and environs, the prevention of the collapse of the international effort in Helmand province, and the facilitation of ISAF expansion.

2007–2009 The disruption of expanded enemy efforts on the approaches to Kandahar City and the shielding of development efforts in Kandahar Province.

2009–2010 The influx of American reinforcements and retraction of the Canadian area of responsibility.

2011 The withdrawal of Canadian forces from Kandahar.

2011–2014 The Canadian commitment to the NATO training mission in Afghanistan.

The Canadian Army in Afghanistan will follow this structure. Unlike any other Canadian military historical account, this book must also reconcile the strategic, operational, and tactical perspectives. It must also discuss non-traditional facets of the 21st century counterinsurgency war. The traditional approach to Canadian military history involves having separate books or works dealing specifically with the operational/tactical or strategic/operational levels. Entire books are devoted to extreme tactical detail of a given battalion or regiment. In Afghanistan, the size of the Canadian forces deployed would only rate at the traditional tactical level in a 20th century military history. However, in 21st century military history, the employment of the Canadian Army's tactical forces had significant operational and strategic level effects. In a similar vein there were new types of units that had no historical equivalent, for example, security force capacity building and reconstruction and development units. These units operated in an integrated fashion alongside traditional combat arms units and thus required a novel narrative structure.

All of these factors demand a radically different approach to any history dealing with the Canadian effort in Afghanistan. Despite the fact that tactical units were employed as the primary level of military activity, this work cannot cover all of the extreme tactical detail a unit history demands. It must select actions that were representative of the whole or otherwise salient. Similarly, at the other end of the spectrum, the diplomatic and strategic machinations and posturing between Ottawa, Washington, NATO in Brussels or others sometimes had an impact on events down to the tactical level, but extreme detail of those processes would detract from our narrative as we are dealing primarily with the Canadian Army. Likewise, the reluctant but progressive expansion of interdepartmental cooperation and non-cooperation could – and should – be the subject of dissertations and memoirs in the future.

This work is about the Canadian Army, specifically the Canadian Army in Afghanistan. It is not an attempt to write interdepartmental history, nor is it an attempt to reconcile the perspectives of other governmental departments with those of the Army's. Suffice it to say, interdepartmental cooperation was problematic during the course of Canada's stay in Afghanistan and any history glossing over those problems will miss an important aspect of our involvement in that country. It will also do a disservice to those who need to learn from such problems to support future operations.

Our understanding of the enemy and how their motives and behaviour relate to the ebb and flow of the war in Afghanistan must, for the time being, remain somewhat conjectural. We do not have anything equivalent to the captured German document collections that historians of the Second World War had access to, nor will we for some time, if ever. We can see how insurgent activity manifested itself and how that changed over time. We have insight into the enemy's methodology. That said, this work does not pretend to be a balanced,

detailed treatise on the Taliban movement and its allies, or their beliefs, or values system. This is a history of the Canadian Army's efforts to combat them and it does not seek to reconcile the Canadian position, moral or otherwise, with those of the insurgents. It is not the purpose of this history to engage in a moral equivalency debate or other pedagogical games. Others can do that later once a basic narrative and chronology has been established. Similarly, this history is not one of the Canadian Armed Forces disciplinary system in Afghanistan, nor is it a legal treatise or does it seek to address public controversy raised during the war. This is a history about Canadians and their allies in Afghanistan, written by a Canadian military historian who traveled to Afghanistan on many occasions during the war to observe, record, and explain what the Canadian Army did.

Canada's war in Afghanistan was unlike any in its history. The nation was forced by circumstances to take an army that was institutionally forged during the Cold War (where the enemy was clearly identifiable), and subsequently modified in the 1990s to conduct stabilization operations (where there are, theoretically, no enemies) and send it into battle against an astute enemy unfettered by either conventional warfare paradigms or moral constraints. This was all done in the very public glare of global and domestic media scrutiny, which in itself was a type of weapon that employed novel methodology. This was coupled to a hyper-legalized environment where the minutiae of our own laws could be turned against us by interest groups (and even by individuals) to constrain Canadian effectiveness on the battlefield. At the same time, the country was subjected to the psychological effects of an improvised explosive device bombing campaign that was, in part, designed to weaken the will of Canadian people and their leaders. The Taliban and its allies had greater access to the Canadian national psyche than Joseph Goebbels ever dreamed of having back in the 1940s. The new information and influence environment had a profound effect on how the Canadian Army fought the war in Afghanistan.

In addition, there were other novel aspects of the war. Canada employed tanks, weapons that were deemed unsuited to 21st Century warfare by numerous uniformed and civilian pundits. There were the Counter-Improvised Explosive Device groups that operated at the tactical level but generated strategic effects. There was the Provincial Reconstruction Team and the Strategic Advisory Team Afghanistan, interagency units that have no real parallel in Canadian military history but were critical in the counterinsurgency and development aspects of the conflict. The Embedded Training Teams and Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams had some basis in the Army's Cold War experience but working and living alongside Afghan soldiers and police took the training of indigenous security forces to a whole new level. Civil-military cooperation and psychological operations capacities, long dormant, were activated and expanded. And there were the Special Operations Forces, the modernized version of the historical Second World War raiding capability, a new Devil's Brigade wreaking havoc at night on the enemy's command structure and bomb makers.

Afghanistan was also Canada's Generation X's first war. Derided by 1990s cultural commentators as lazy, self-absorbed hedonists and slackers, Gen Xers proved otherwise by leading the Canadian Army's efforts from brigade down to company level. Generation Y, another group considered to be problematic by social critics, formed the cadre of privates, corporals, and second lieutenants at the sharp end of the fight. This was not a Baby Boomer war. If this history had a soundtrack, it would be Metallica's "Black Album." "Enter Sandman" played on iPod speakers as Canadian M-777 guns fired on the enemy at night, and "Broken, Beaten and Scarred" with its "We die hard!" refrain was a favourite in some convoys, not Credence Clearwater Revival's "Run Through the Jungle" or The Rolling Stones "Paint it Black." This was a generation of soldiers who understood the value of social networking sites, could relax in their forward operating bases playing first-person shooter videogames after patrols, and could teleconference with their loved ones, all without having a deleterious impact on their ability to absorb horrific violence and to combat the insurgency in some of the most primitive environments on earth. We, as Canadians, should be proud of them for their dedication, their sacrifice, and their valour.

AN ABORTED PEACE:

DISPATCHES FROM KABUL, 1990-1992

The Canadian Army's involvement with Afghanistan pre-dated Al Qaeda's 9/11 attacks. At the end of the Cold War and during the immediate post-Cold War period, the ideological antagonists withdrew from their engagements in the Third World. Far from reaping a peace dividend, the release of suppressed animosities or emergent nationalism resulted in many parts of the world descending into extreme violence. In many cases, the United Nations was brought in to broker ceasefires and withdrawals in Latin America, Africa, and in Asia. One of these missions was the United Nations Good Offices in Afghanistan and Pakistan or UNGOMAP. UNGOMAP's task was to observe the implementation of the 1988 Geneva Accords and amounted to watching the massive Soviet war machine leave Afghanistan.[1] When the withdrawal was completed, UNGOMAP was handed over to the Office of the Secretary General for Afghanistan and Pakistan (OSGAP), which became a coordinating body for UN activities in Afghanistan.

In April 1989, during the period after the Soviet pull-out, the Canadian government committed Canadian military engineers to a UN mission called the Mine Awareness and Clearance Training Programme (MACTP). Administered by OSGAP, the MACTP was created by the UN as part of its larger reconstruction program for Afghanistan. The MACTP was established to train Afghan deminers in Islamabad, Pakistan, where they would then transition to Afghan non-governmental demining organizations inside Afghanistan.[2]

The Canadian contribution to MACTP was called Operation DECIMAL. There were four rotations from March 1989 to July 1990, each consisting of 12 combat engineers drawn from units across Canada. Working in small teams out of Quetta and Peshawar, Pakistan, the Canadians trained an estimated 10 500 Afghan men and women in the hazardous art of demining. The task was handed over to non-governmental civilian organizations and the Canadian troops returned home by the fall of 1990.[3]

The "decent interval" after the Soviet withdrawal did not last. The various Mujahideen groups supported by Pakistan and Iran were re-energized and launched assaults on the Afghan Communist regime led by Mohammad Najibullah.

OSGAP was not set up as a peacekeeping mission; in many ways, it was the predecessor to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) established a decade later. However, OSGAP maintained a Military Advisory Unit in Kabul just in case the UN was asked to provide peacekeeping forces in the region. Canada agreed to deploy a

lieutenant-colonel for a year as part of the Military Advisory Unit.[4] It was understood by the Department of National Defence that "OSGAP is a small mission without a formal mandate. It is in effect a reconnaissance-in-place. Its future and utility are often questioned."[5] Initially stationed in Islamabad, LCol Harry Mohr was the first Canadian with OSGAP. His successor, LCol Mark Skidmore, deployed to Kabul in 1992. Their observations and reports spanning the period May 1991 to December 1992 when OSGAP was withdrawn, were folded into Canadian embassy reporting by Ambassador Louis Delvoie in Islamabad to Ottawa. Canadian observations during this time provide us with context for Canada's eventual deep involvement in Afghanistan.

Benon Sevan from Cyprus was the UN representative who took on the Sisyphean task of attempting to achieve peace in the wake of the Geneva Accords. The Canadian report of 23 May 1991 revealed the obstacles placed in his path:

> [Sevan's] strategy emphasizes a unique bottom-up approach for any Afghanistan negotiation, which seeks agreement of all Afghan groups at early stages in the negotiating process. This would help avoid the weakness of the Geneva Accord, which had agreement from the major international actors but little impact on the ground in Afghanistan. The task ahead for Sevan is to thrash out a transitional arrangement that would actually be adhered to by the divergent Afghan factions. Given the Afghans fratricidal nature, this task is daunting.... For about a month, Sevan has pursued a blistering pace of meetings in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Afghanistan to develop the framework for negotiations...he is convinced that all the major international players are ready to support his peace effort but he is irritated by the games played by the Pak intelligence agency ISI. On one hand the Pakistan gov't [sic], including the PM, President and Foreign Minister, have all endorsed a negotiated settlement, yet ISI continues to play its war game through its continued support and guidance of the Afghan extremists.[6]

Notably, and prophetically,

> Sevan's efforts to create a realistic process to establish a framework for Afghan peace negotiations merits support by Canada. The ball is now in the court of the leadership of the myriad of Afghan factions who must decide whether a share in power of transition government is worth more to them than the personal gains they may have received through a decade of protracted warfare.[7]

By August 1991, Sevan had made headway and all of the antagonists agreed to talk peace. This included notable Afghan Mujahideen leaders Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Yunus Khalis, and Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, who will all be discussed again later in Volume I.

Despite the fact that Pakistani President Nawaz Sharif endorsed the peace plan, and the Pakistani Minister of Foreign Affairs reached out to get the Mujahideen to the table, Canadians reported that "the Pak military and ISI are maintaining and in some cases stepping up their covert assistance to the Mujahideen's military campaign."[8]

More progress was made in August 1991 toward determining what a transitional government would look like:

> Composition of the transitional government becomes an exercise in seeking common ground, that is, finding out who is acceptable to both sides rather than dividing power or authority, a concept quite alien to Afghan culture. At the end of the six-month period, a national Loya Jirga (Tribal Council or Convention) would meet to select a new interim government. A second stage interim government would write a new national constitution and hold nation-wide elections.These elections would be held on a non-party basis with the electoral competition among personalities. This would be done to avoid splits based on parties that have only limited regional or ethnic appeal.[9]

However, "Najibullah the Communist" had to be removed for this to take place, but he was not willing to leave. And then there was Hekmatyar:

> Although moderate parties mistrust the ruthless and ambitious Hekmatyar, they believe it is better having him inside their Afghan tent rather than outside to avoid a problem…[10]

The peace process stalled throughout the fall of 1991. By January 1992 Canadian observers noted "The Pakistan military and particularly the military intelligence agency (ISI) have long favoured a military solution to the Afghan question and have been known for their favouritism towards Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's fundamentalist Hezbe Islami organization."[11]

In February 1992, Sevan was making headway but there were serious problems:

> Sevan used an Afghan metaphor to describe the UN peace process as 'a carpet we are weaving together'….The three moderate Peshawar-based [Mujahideen] parties have endorsed the peace process, whereas the three fundamentalist parties have rejected it. Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami is by far the most significant. It is well organized, well disciplined. Its regular use of assassination to terrorize its opponent strikes fear amongst moderate Afghans.[12]

Hekmatyar, presumably reflecting the proclivities of those who backed him, asserted that "no ceasefire should take place as long as the Najibullah regime is in power." And the UN peace plan was based on inclusiveness. That said, it appeared as though the process might work.

In anticipation of that occurrence, movement was made in March 1992 to look at providing Canadian resources to a possible Afghan mission:

> Early diplomatic contact will also be necessary to establish working contact for aid, trade, immigration, and other aspects of normal bilateral relations. CIDA should be prepared for an appeal for reconstruction assistance from both the UN system and the new transition government….. As part of the 'Golden Triangle' and a major centre of drug production and export, it will be in the RCMP's best interest to consider establishing liaison arrangements with the new Afghan government…. Canada may be approached to expand its military participation in OSGAP or to participate in a new UN peace-keeping mechanism. Although trade potential is limited, there may also be some trade opportunities for Canadian firms.[13]

All bets were off by April 1992 as the ISI-supported fundamentalist Mujahideen offensive ground toward Najibullah-held Kabul:

> These plans are now out the window. During the last three weeks, events have been accelerating at such a pace that the UN can no longer wait for such a drawn-out process to succeed. Simply put, the Najibullah government is on the verge of collapse. If it did collapse, Kabul would fall into chaos and anarchy, and any possibility of a negotiated settle[ment] would evaporate.[14]

Bagram Air Field north of Kabul fell to Mujahideen forces on 15 April 1992, and Najibullah requested that the UN evacuate him. The UN rushed to establish some form of transitional government; the Canadian observers were pessimistic about this. They believed that the fundamentalist "hardliners will be encouraged to pursue the military option. If chaos [ensues] all Afghans will be the losers."[15]

Two days later, Najibullah was deposed by a coup d'état led by generals who had links to the moderate Tajik Mujahideen leader, Ahmad Shah Massoud. OSGAP gave Najibullah sanctuary in the UN compound in Kabul. Canadian reports stated, "The Afghan Mujahideen are now in a power feeding-frenzy."[16]

Massoud, who was not beholden to the ISI-supported factions in Peshawar, was increasingly seen as an enemy by the newly styled "Peshawar Mujahideen Council" as he and his supporters had stolen the march on them. Canadian analysis concluded "At this crucial juncture, the Peshawar-based leadership is once again out to lunch" and was "impotent" in the face of the moderates despite their "huffing and puffing."[17] Canadian observers believed that "One should not rule [out] the possibility of a head-on clash between the forces of Massoud and Hekmatyar which could be sparked by their ideological differences or the deep animosities the two guerrilla leaders feel for each other." They warned that "the stakes are high.

Even if a transition government is put in place, many difficult issues will have to be dealt with, including the problem of establishing some sort of law and order in a country that has become accustomed to war and anarchy."[18]

On 25 April 1992, the Mujahideen groups entered Kabul with no resistance. The moderate Mujahideen worked to establish an interim government under Dr. Mojadedi, while Hekmatyar and his supporters worked to undermine it[19] and the Pakistani government announced that they had reached a ceasefire accommodation between all of the factions. Reports from Kabul suggested otherwise:

> A loose alliance of guerrilla forces led by Ahmad Shah Massoud, ethnic militias, and government troops loyal to Massoud dominate the city. However, the fundamentalist Hezb-i-Islami Mujahideen are continuing their attempts to gain control of strategic areas. Fighting has varied from scattered skirmishes to full-scale rocket and artillery barrages. Afghan Air Force jets have bombed and strafed a Hezb-i-Islami guerrilla enclave to the south of the Afghan capital. The most vicious fighting has occurred when ethnic militias from the north have attempted to cleanse sectors of the capital of Hezb-i-Islami guerrillas. The current fighting has made a mockery of a Pakistani-supported ceasefire….the praise that the Pakistani Government has been heaping on itself has reached almost comical proportions.[20]

OSGAP headquarters was rocketed and vehicles were shot at during the chaos. An Uzbek militia, led by Abdul Rashid Dostum, arrived to help Massoud and together routed Hekmatyar's forces from the city; they subsequently retired to the hills and bombarded Kabul in retaliation.[21] The factions called for a truce. By coincidence, a man from Saudi Arabia who knew Hekmatyar and Massoud well had just been expelled from the Arabian Peninsula and recently arrived in Pakistan. He was rushed forward by the Pakistanis to mediate between the two fighters over the radio, but Hekmatyar would not budge. The Saudi intermediary departed Pakistan for the Sudan.[22]

Benon Sevan approached Mojadedi and asked him if it was a good idea to deploy a UN peacekeeping force to Kabul. He was told, "the only ones who can stabilize the situation are the Afghans themselves." Canadian observers noted:

> The sad reality of these remarks is that even after installation in Kabul, the Peshawar-based leaders continue to harbour their delusions of grandeur and inflated self-importance. Despite the need for strong leadership to coordinate a massive reconstruction and rehabilitation effort, petty politics continue to be the priority. Both Mojadedi and Rabbani are milquetoast-like characters and fall far short of meeting Afghanistan's pressing need for strong executive leadership.[23]

Ambassador Delvoie recommended the withdrawal of the Canadian OSGAP observers, given the dangerous state of affairs that had emerged:

> We have been unable to discern what their residual mandate is, or exactly what it is they are actually doing beyond collecting info. It seems to us that those OSGAP officers assigned on a rotating basis to OSGAP office in Kabul are being unnecessarily exposed to real danger for no good purpose whatsoever….[24]

As the factions settled into Kabul, LCol Mark Skidmore reported that the situation was calm for the moment but dangerous, and that it was difficult to patrol and collect information.[25] Factions associated with Hekmatyar, Rabbani, Massoud and Dostum occupied different parts of Kabul, and ethnic Hazaras were returning. It was difficult to ascertain what was happening outside of Kabul. Hekmatyar was "the critical and unknown factor."[26]

The new Afghan government tried to work with the UN. Indeed, the idea of a loya jirga was revived by the new Foreign Minister, a certain Hamid Karzai, who Canadian observers reported was "charismatic, cosmopolitan, and speaks excellent English. He also has poor timing." Discussions with allies noted that there was a consensus for holding a "shura" but the American representatives possessed a "near-apocalyptic vision of future developments in Afghanistan's large scale armed conflict between Dostum, Hekmatyar, Massoud, and other factions across Afghanistan."[27]

LCol Skidmore's final dispatch on 8 December 1992 reported that the:

> Rabbani government is attempting to organize [a shura] to settle the country's leadership and direction…. Parties are still disagreeing on levels of representation…. Fundamentalist Hekmatyar adamantly opposed to participation of former Communist Dostum. Pragmatists like Rabbani recognize that Dostum controls north and must be included…. Lacking any central authority, even in the capital, the government cannot ensure the security of shura delegates...new fighting reported around important Shindand airbase near Herat, Commander Ismael Khan has captured the base but it now appears that Hekmatyar forces are trying to recapture it. Situation in Kabul does not look promising. Rumours of coups abound in Kabul with defence minister Massoud, Dostum, and even old communist Khalq party as the alleged authors. Coup is unlikely though as there is little real power or authority to take over from….

Skidmore also noted:

> Duty in Kabul lasted until withdrawal of all personnel on order of Permanent Representative of the Secretary General…. Evac [sic] by vehicle on 07 December 1992. Security situation in Kabul at time of the withdrawal was tense but workable. Decision to withdraw at such an important juncture was surprising and disappointing. Military advisors feel that decision was politically motivated in an effort to distance OSGAP from the shura and its aftermath. Concern over security was likely a convenient excuse. ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross] has no intention of leaving Kabul. Some embassies are also reopening. OSGAP's credibility in Afghanistan as an honest broker has been severely diminished. Advise on planned future employment.[28]

OSGAP was shut down in December 1992 and LCol Skidmore was repatriated from Kabul. Canada was by now heavily engaged in the Balkans and he was slated to lead 1st Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment in Croatia. One of his company commanders was Major Jonathan Vance, who would later command Joint Task Force Afghanistan in 2009. Another player in Croatia was Major Pat Stogran, a UN Military Observer in Croatia at the time Skidmore and Vance were walking the line. Col Andy Leslie, eventually deputy commander of ISAF in Kabul in 2003, was chief of staff of the UN command in southern Croatia that commanded CANBAT 1 in 1995. Col Rick Hillier was a staff officer in the UN headquarters in Zagreb, Croatia. Another Balkans alumnus was Major Peter Devlin, who commanded an infantry company in Sarajevo in 1992 and would eventually lead the Kabul Multinational Brigade (KMNB). All of the Canadian battle group commanders who served in Afghanistan had previously served in Bosnia, Croatia, or Kosovo. Indeed, numerous senior Canadian military leaders who were in Afghanistan after the events of 2001 had experience with the UN in the Balkans, and many vowed that the limitations placed on Canadian troops by the UN would not be tolerated in any future conflict that Canada became engaged in. LCol Skidmore eventually returned to Kabul as a military advisor with UNAMA in 2008.

Pakistan's unwillingness to seriously support peace efforts in Afghanistan, coupled with a decreasing level of perseverance and adroitness exhibited by the United Nations personalities involved, played a key role in the deteriorating situation. This in turn was aggravated by the inability of multiple Mujahideen factions to work together toward a common aim. This was exploited by others, specifically the Wahhabist fundamentalists supported by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Taken together these were the proximate causes that ultimately led to Canada's deep involvement in Afghanistan for a decade after the 9/11 attacks in 2001. It was not simply a matter of a poorly executed post-Cold War endgame by the superpowers, though we cannot ignore the fact that it was a major contributing factor.

Backing Hekmatyar ultimately proved to be less and less useful to elements in Pakistan who sought to influence events in Afghanistan for their benefit. In time, they turned to a religious militia in Quetta employed by merchants in that city to ensure that the trade route from Quetta to Kandahar and the ring road in Afghanistan was clear of 'banditry' that supposedly was interfering with trade. The leader of that militia – the Taliban – was an obscure but charismatic figure named Mullah Omar. Between 1994 and 1996, Mullah Omar's Taliban generated enough momentum to take control of most of Afghanistan. They co-opted a popular leader in Kandahar province named Mullah Naquibullah, who turned Kandahar City over to the Taliban when it appeared that another Mujahedeen leader, Gul Agha Sherzai, was losing his grip on power. Hekmatyar himself opposed the Taliban, then changed sides and joined them against Massoud and the moderate Mujahideen after the fight for Kabul. Kabul fell to the Taliban in August 1996 and the former President, Mohammad Najibullah, was taken from the UN compound, castrated and hung from a telephone pole. His mouth was stuffed full of money and his nostrils filled with cigarette butts. Massoud's forces retreated to positions north of Kabul and a new war started, one that continued to rage throughout the 1990s.

The Saudi individual who had previously assisted the Pakistanis in trying to mediate between Massoud and Hekmatyar back in 1992 was drawn into an organization led by Abdullah Azzam, a man who harboured fantasies of a Muslim Foreign Legion to protect followers of Mohammad in conflict zones around the globe. When Azzam was assassinated, the Saudi man took over the remnants of the effort and reorganized it into Al Qaeda, "The Base." Al Qaeda moved its training, communications, planning weapons experimentation, and production facilities to Taliban-controlled parts of Afghanistan, where their operatives laid the groundwork for the 9/11 and other attacks. On the road to New York and Washington, they assassinated Ahmad Shah Massoud on behalf of the Taliban on 10 September 2001. The man from Saudi Arabia was Osama bin Laden.

In the early 1990s, Afghanistan was not even on Canada's political or military radar; it did not even have a Canadian Embassy. Pakistan was a Canadian foreign policy backwater. In those days, Canadian policy centred on being the UN peacekeeper par excellence and deploying on as many UN missions around the world as possible. Afghanistan was seen as an opportunity to engage in more UN peacekeeping. When that did not pan out, Canadian attention was directed elsewhere to places like Somalia (1992-1993), Croatia (1992-1995), Bosnia (1992-2004), and Cambodia (1992-1993), among other locations decolonizing from Communism in the post-Cold War system. Indeed, Canadian Army involvement in the Balkans from 1991 to 2004 was on par, in terms of size of forces, with what would be deployed to Afghanistan after 2002.

In the 1990s, the eyes of the world were on the violent drama unfolding in the remnants of the former Yugoslavia. The global media's satellite TV cameras and celebrity reporters focused on the streets of Mogadishu, the mounds of corpses in Rwanda, and the ruins of Sarajevo. None were in Kabul, let alone in Kandahar. No one in Canada had any inkling that Afghanistan would come to dominate events after 11 September 2001. After ten years of expeditionary operations, however, the Canadian Army was mature and experienced. It now had to adapt to the new circumstances.

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"IN THE BEGINNING....":

SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 2001

The war did not start with formal national pronouncements as the First and Second World Wars had. Nor did the radar stations of the Distant Early Warning Line pick up nuclear bombers flying over the North Pole. There was no protracted tension between diplomats arguing over territorial boundaries in smoke-filled rooms. Canada's war in Afghanistan started in the 20 minutes in which 19 Saudi Arabian operatives from the Al Qaeda organization seized control of four airliners and used them as missiles to destroy the World Trade Center buildings in New York City and attack the Pentagon in Washington, DC.

The refugees from these attacks came in the form of passengers from hundreds of aircraft stranded in airspace over the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic Oceans and unable to enter the United States. Some wore Armani suits, others Levi's jeans; they were not lines of ragged people toting their personal goods in carts across the steppe. The passengers of one of the airliners were the first soldiers in this war, thrown into the front line of Business Class as they formed what amounted to an ad hoc citizen's militia and tried to retake the cockpit of United Flight 93. These events ultimately led to the first Canadian military deployment to Afghanistan in 2002.

After nearly 14 years of operations in the Balkans and 40 years in the Middle East, Canadians were conditioned to believe that Canada's army was strictly a peacekeeping force. It was therefore with some surprise that they saw the members of 3rd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (3 PPCLI), The Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) and the logisticians of the Forward Support Group (FSG) board transport aircraft at Edmonton International Airport for the long flight to Kandahar in February 2002.

How do we connect these events? There were two strategic processes, one Canadian and the other American, which led to Canada's commitment to the war in Afghanistan. Both converged to influence how the first Canadian Army combat force in decades would operate in the far reaches of the world, and the story of the 3 PPCLI Battle Group cannot be told without understanding what those influences were. Most importantly, the groundwork activities of that battle group, within that context, had longer-term implications for future Canadian forces when they deployed back to Kandahar in 2005 and operated in that environment for half a decade. No one could have foreseen the length and depth of Canada's commitment then, but the roots of it were laid once 3 PPCLI started operating in Kandahar.

Another important aspect of the 2002 deployment is that the Canadian battle group operated as a part of an American brigade combat team, not as an independent command. The actions of the 3 PPCLI Battle Group were thus intertwined with those of its parent American formation headquarters in ways later deployments were not. LCol Pat Stogran, the 3 PPCLI Battle Group commanding officer, likened the relationship between the Americans and the Canadians in Afghanistan to the First Special Service Force during the Second World War. Indeed, LCol Stogran used Devil's Brigade imagery, code words and analogies while he was in command. It is impossible to tell a purely Canadian story for this first deployment, as the Canadians and Americans worked shoulder to shoulder in ways they had not in decades.

The 3 PPCLI Battle Group had a series of particular tasks that directly contributed to the larger strategic objectives established by both Canada and the United States. Once those tasks are understood, it is easier to see what Canada accomplished in these early days. We do not have the space to delve into the exhaustive specifics of both the Canadian and American strategic decision-making processes. Consequently, this section will only provide enough insight into the decisions, policy, and strategy that formed the context of the 3 PPCLI Battle Group mission in order to understand why Canada made a subsequent series of commitments to the NATO-led ISAF mission in 2003-2004. The strategic decisions of 2001 and the actions of 3 PPCLI are inextricably linked to, and established the conditions for, subsequent decisions and operations.

After 11 September 2001

The Al Qaeda organization was formally identified as the main enemy within a week of the 9/11 attacks. On 19 September, a Pakistani delegation from the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) organization attempted to persuade the Taliban leadership to give up Osama bin Laden to the Americans, but that overture was rejected. Within six days, Taliban fundraising ramped up in several cities in Pakistan, with recruiting focused on religious students who volunteered to fight in Afghanistan.[1] There was, however, a split among the Kandahar Taliban. Three leaders in Kandahar City disagreed with Mullah Omar's decision to reject the Pakistani approach.[2] Indeed, the Canadian ambassador in Pakistan, Glyn Berry, was already warning his superiors in Ottawa that the Taliban might even collapse completely under pressure of an assault. A dangerous power vacuum might emerge in Kabul and thus Afghanistan, which in turn would affect the region.[3]

At the same time, a broad understanding that the war against Al Qaeda was global in scope and that Afghanistan was one of several possible fronts emerged among planners in the Pentagon and in Tampa, home of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) – the American headquarters responsible for the Middle East and the Horn of Africa.

Al Qaeda was believed to be operating in Yemen, Somalia, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, as well as in Afghanistan. The Taliban regime in Afghanistan, already engaged in a war with the Northern Alliance factions, was known to have provided Al Qaeda with sanctuary after the organization was forced to decamp from the Sudan in 1996. During the intervening years, Al Qaeda constructed training, communications and research bases, and the organization developed a parasitical relationship with the Taliban regime. The infiltration of this safe haven in Taliban-controlled areas and the destruction of Al Qaeda were given the highest priority as the American leadership made its plans at Camp David on 15-16 September 2001.[4]

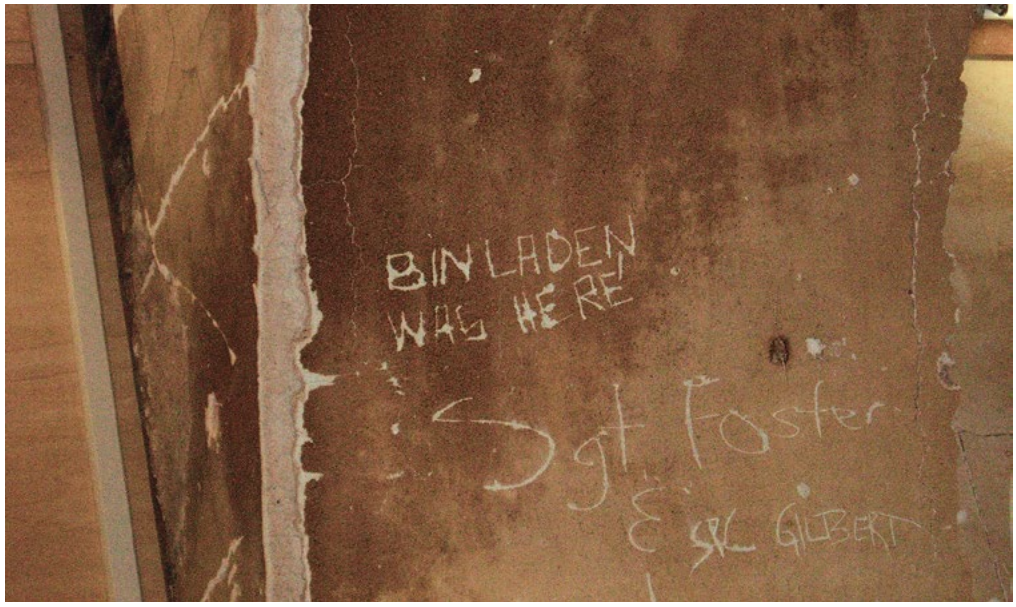

Photo Credit: Author

Afghanistan was used as a base, communications, and training facility by the Al Qaeda organization. The 9/11 attacks were conceived and planned in Al Qaeda facilities in and around Kandahar City.

Several questions emerged at that meeting: should Al Qaeda be targeted exclusively, or should both the Taliban regime and Al Qaeda be attacked? Notably, there were concerns about the relationship between the two entities and the Hussein regime in Iraq. Should both Afghanistan and Iraq be engaged as part of a larger campaign? Those discussions established an important principle of the war: as one participant argued, "the chief purpose of U.S. military action was not punishing those behind 9/11 but attacking those who might launch the next 9/11."[5] There was a very real concern early on about the use of chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons against targets in North America, in addition to the possibility that attacks of the same magnitude as 9/11 could take place.[6]

Second, the Camp David meeting also established that the war against the Al Qaeda organization was going to be a "sustained, broad campaign" not limited to military action in Afghanistan. It would also involve the tracking and limitation of the enemy's financial system and the attenuation of Al Qaeda's global networks of operatives before they could attack again. Significantly, another purpose was to deter regimes sympathetic to Al Qaeda from capitalizing on the confused state of affairs that prevailed at the time. A key principle, one which would directly affect Canadian operations, was "to force the terrorists to play defense: if they had to run, hide, and devote their energies to evading our active pursuit, they would have less capability to plan and execute new, large scale offensive operations."[7]

Consequently, American strategic guidance expressed on 19 September 2001 established the following targets:[8]

1. targets worldwide, such as [Osama bin Laden] Al Qaeda cells in regions outside Afghanistan and even outside the Middle East…. It will be important to indicate early on that our field of action is much wider than Afghanistan;

2. ground targets that provide opportunities to bring back intelligence that could help us run down terrorists' networks; and

3. opportunities to demonstrate a capability or boldness that will give pause to terrorists and/or those who harbor terrorists and for them to exercise greater care, at greater cost or with much greater fear….

Item 2 deserves some elaboration. The Americans who conceptualized the campaign understood that information on Al Qaeda and affiliated organizations was lacking. Indeed, several investigations already underway for several years were tracking the dangerous activities of Abdul Qadeer "AQ" Khan, a Pakistani nuclear weapons designer, and the vast air movements' network controlled by former Soviet air force officer Viktor Bout, among others. Men like Khan and Bout operated in the shadows, and the linkages between them, various non-state players like Al Qaeda, and established governments were of great concern when it came to the security of North America. Military operations, including those projected for Afghanistan, were in part calibrated to generate intelligence collection opportunities, not only to stop future attacks but also to identify the nature and extent of the global threat against North America.[9] Again, this ultimately affected Canadian operations in Afghanistan.

Why did all this matter to Canada? There is no doubt that the United States is Canada's closest ally in cultural, military, and economic terms. The traumatic effects of the 9/11 attacks directly affected Canada on several levels, from those living in Gander, Newfoundland, who accepted an influx of airliners forced to land when North American airspace was closed, to the pilots of Air Command's CF-18s over the Yukon who could be asked to shoot down seized airliners, to workers in Ontario auto plants whose livelihood depended on an open trade relationship with the United States.[10] Of note and sometimes overlooked, however, Canada is also a charter member of NATO. The principle of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty – an attack against one ally is an attack against all – was put into effect on 13 September 2001 with a variety of obligations.[11]

Traditionally, Canada has deployed military forces overseas for forward security purposes. It is far better to deal with ideologies that pose threats to Canadian interests and values overseas than in the Western hemisphere. In essence, this uncodified but extant strategic doctrine has summoned Canada's soldiers overseas to the First and Second World Wars, the Cold War, UN and other peacekeeping missions in the Third World, NATO stabilization missions in the Balkans, and even gunboat diplomacy in the Caribbean. Canada's deployment as part of a coalition in Afghanistan was in keeping with this strategic tradition.[12]

The lack of large forces, strategic deployment capabilities and extensive command, control, communications, and intelligence capacities, however, meant that Canada could not tackle the task alone and in any event it had not done so in the past. Coalition operations were and remained the order of the day. It was a question of how exactly a Canadian contribution could be integrated into an American campaign plan while establishing clear Canadian objectives at the same time, thus protecting Canadian autonomy. That would take some time. Meanwhile, the Americans formulated and implemented the first stages of their campaign plan to deal with enemy forces in Afghanistan.

The general idea was that the Northern Alliance forces, with the support of special operations, selective use of airpower, and covert action by American and coalition forces, would remove the Taliban regime instead of using a major influx of coalition military forces to directly confront opposition forces.[13] This course of action was selected because of the lack of available intelligence on the specifics of Al Qaeda's presence in Afghanistan and elsewhere. At the same time, it was designed to manage the post-war situation in order to avoid a destructive power vacuum similar to the one that had existed when the Mujahideen defeated the Communist forces in 1992-1993. It was recognized by American planners early on that close ties with Afghan forces were the key to accomplishing both objectives and that the coalition forces' footprint would be deliberately small to avoid antagonizing the population as the Soviets had in 1979-1989.[14]

Those concepts were debated during the remainder of September 2001 but by 27 September, the first covert CIA teams were sent in to liaise with the Northern Alliance and prepare the way for the arrival of coalition special operations forces.[15]

Meanwhile, the Canadian Army did what it usually did during a crisis: it examined a variety of options in anticipation of being asked by the Canadian government to deploy forces. On 21 September, the Chief of the Land Staff, LGen Mike Jeffrey, instructed the staff to prepare for a series of options to be briefed to the Army Council on 27 September. Under similar conditions, the Canadian Army would use an outline contingency plan called Operation SABRE, which was essentially an organizational and logistics template for a heavy combat brigade for overseas employment. That plan was not deemed useful for the situation at hand, so other templates for different types of units and formations were examined.[16]

The Army was capable of deploying one of three types of forces, the planners explained.[17] The first option was the Intermediate Reaction Force (Land) (IRF(L)), which was essentially an infantry battalion with an artillery battery, a combat engineer squadron, a recce squadron and integral support, forming a battle group. The IRF(L) was similar to Canada's Cold War NATO ACE Mobile Force (Land) or UN Standby Force commitment. One battalion in Canada was at a higher state of readiness for global deployment, and that task rotated between the three light infantry battalions.

The second option was a Peace Support Brigade. This option was similar to the force deployed to Bosnia in 1995-1996 as part of the NATO-led Implementation Force. Optimized as a coalition command and control commitment, the Peace Support Brigade included a Canadian brigade headquarters, a Canadian battalion and recce squadron, and the ability to command two or more allied battalion-sized units. The formation was optimized as a stabilization force, not a combat formation.

The third option was a Main Contingency Force (MCF). Essentially, it was based on Operation SABRE but it could be a light infantry brigade or a heavy mechanized brigade, or two or three battalion-sized units under a brigade headquarters, depending on the circumstances.

Canada had, however, not yet committed Army forces to the campaign. For the time being, the options remained hypothetical and the staffs continued to refine them as events unfolded.

Into October

On 2 October 2001, an American intelligence official met secretly in Quetta, Pakistan, with the de facto second-in-command of the Taliban regime, Mullah Osmani, and presented him with an ultimatum: hand over Osama bin Laden or suffer the consequences.[18] With no positive reply, the Operation ENDURING FREEDOM air campaign was launched on 7 October. After five days, all of the identified fixed targets had been destroyed by a combination of carrier-based aircraft, strategic bombers, and cruise missiles. The air campaign then shifted to targets of opportunity.[19]

Photo Credit: Author

Two coalitions emerged to assist Afghanistan. The first was the American-led Operation ENDURING FREEDOM which was formed to hunt down the Al Qaeda organization first on a regional, and later a global scale.

Between 9 and 11 October, a series of meetings in Washington laid the groundwork for what would eventually become the International Security Assistance Force or ISAF. One of the main concerns was the possible seizure of Kabul by the Fahim Khan faction of the Northern Alliance. The planners did not want a repeat of the events of 1992-1993, when victorious Mujahideen had sacked the city, started a civil war, and generated tribal resentments that still festered in the country; that was exactly what had led to the creation of the Taliban in the first place. It was possible that if the Tajik- and Uzbek-dominated Northern Alliance took control, the Pashtuns would become politically alienated, which in turn could fuel a continued civil war even without the presence of the Taliban. During those discussions, the possibility of "creating an international force to preserve the neutrality of the capital city" emerged.[20]

This 'international force' idea would be developed in greater detail later on, in November. At the time, however, the American planners acknowledged that "We had influence, but not necessarily control." One argument articulated in the Pentagon was that "Creating a stable, post-Taliban Afghanistan is desirable but not necessarily within the power of the U.S.…

The U.S. should not allow concerns about stability to paralyze U.S. efforts to oust the Taliban leadership." As more fidelity was applied, the idea that a non-U.S. international force should handle Kabul gained credence by mid-October.[21] Following a substantial evolution of that idea, Canada eventually led the mission in 2004.

There were, however, serious concerns about "nation-building" in American circles, and that requires some explanation given the course of the campaign over the next five years. The idea that Afghans – and not bureaucrats from the UN, international organizations, or non-governmental aid organizations – should determine the future of Afghanistan was in circulation in Washington at the time, as was the desire to avoid developing aid dependency. Some American planners viewed top-heavy reconstruction efforts in the Balkans as a poor model and were concerned that the Afghans would view too much outside interference as meddling and react poorly to it, perhaps reverting back to the destructive civil war days of 1992-1996. Consequently, the principle of minimal aid and development intervention was established early on, with a greater emphasis on encouraging and enabling Afghan institutions.[22] The effects of that approach would lead ultimately to the creation of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in late 2002 and early 2003 and Canada's eventual command of the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team in 2005.

Canadian Army planners, meanwhile, met throughout October and determined that the MCF (heavy) option was "not feasible within 90 days because of logistics constraints"[23] due to the lack of Canadian-owned strategic airlift and sealift – Canada did not yet have C-17 transports.[24] Each of the Army's Areas was tasked with preparing for a different contingency related to Afghanistan, depending on what the government decided to send. Land Force Western Area was told to prepare an "augmented IRF(L) battalion" that would include a recce squadron and possibly a nuclear, biological, and chemical defence platoon.[25]

Land Force Central Area, on the other hand, was to plan for a MCF (light) option which would include a brigade headquarters, the IRF(L) and a battalion group from Land Force Western Area, an armoured recce squadron, a light artillery battery, a combat engineer regiment, a service battalion, a field ambulance, and military police. Land Force Central Area was told to be prepared to use 2nd Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment, a mechanized battalion, alongside the IRF(L) battalion.[26] The *Secteur du Québec de la Force terrestre* (Land Force Quebec Area) was instructed to prepare a brigade headquarters for a Peace Support Operation "as envisioned by the UN standby system." They were also to be prepared to take Task Force Bosnia-Herzegovina (essentially a battle group) under command and prepare a second battalion and the IRF(L) battle group. The implications of pulling out of the Stabilization Force commitment in Bosnia was not discussed in detail at that time,[27] but there were concerns elsewhere that Al Qaeda elements in the Balkans might launch operations there and disrupt the fragile peace that Canada and its allies had painstakingly generated throughout the 1990s.[28]

On 18 October, the Chief of the Land Staff issued Warning Order No. 1 instructing that preparations be made to "position the Army for possible taskings in support of Operation APOLLO."[29] Between 18 and 24 October, there was considerable activity between Ottawa and the U.S. CENTCOM. The IRF(L) was now placed on a 48-hour notice to move on 24 October. Within seven days, this state of readiness applied only to the Vanguard Company Group, not the whole battalion.[30]

There was irony in this situation. The IRF(L) battalion was based on 3 PPCLI, a light infantry battalion. The Canadian Army's three light infantry battalions were originally post-Cold War 'orphan' units. When the drawdown took place in 1991-1992, one mechanized battalion from each infantry regiment was designated as a "10/90" or "Total Force" battalion with a reduced number of regulars and an increased number of Militia personnel. When the Airborne Regiment was disbanded after the Somalia affair, the soldiers from the three company-sized jump commandos were handed over to their parent regiments and incorporated into the Total Force battalions, which were re-designated as light infantry battalions. Initially, they had no real role and even less equipment available, but over time, industrious battalion commanding officers turned these orphan units around and started to craft light infantry doctrine, including doctrine for airmobile operations.

The Chief of the Land Staff, however, was under some financial constraint and his staff had been preparing to abolish the light infantry battalions, mechanize all units with the new infantry fighting vehicle, the LAV III, and remove equipment such as tanks and self-propelled guns from the Canadian Army's order of battle. Only after 9/11 did it suddenly become apparent that the most suitable organization available for near-immediate deployment was 3 PPCLI, the light infantry battalion occupying the IRF(L) rotation that fall.

Meanwhile, the CENTCOM concept of operations for ground forces in Afghanistan was implemented. American units secured an outer ring of bases in adjacent countries: Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Pakistan. The CIA Special Activities Division, code-named JAWBREAKER, liaised with anti-Taliban commanders inside Afghanistan, and facilitated the entry of Special Operations Task Forces (SOTFs) K-Bar and Dagger to work with the Northern Alliance forces. The SOTFs improved the Afghans' ability to engage the Taliban regime and Al Qaeda forces. In theory, both activities would generate intelligence on Al Qaeda leadership locations and their Afghanistan-based activities. TF 11, based around the highly classified Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) special mission units, would then sortie out on direct action missions to kill or capture Al Qaeda leadership and conduct sensitive site exploitation missions to gather strategic intelligence on Al Qaeda's global activities so that other 9/11-like plots could be targeted and stopped.[31]

Photo Credit: Author

The Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force Afghanistan supported the Northern Alliance in the takedown of the Taliban regime in 2001-2002. Canada contributed forces to this organization and supported its activities by protecting its bases at Kandahar Air Field.

The Ides of November

By November 2001, Canada had established a robust planning and coordination element at the CENTCOM HQ called Joint Task Force South West Asia. None of the planners in Tampa or Ottawa anticipated the rapid collapse of the Taliban regime on several fronts within a three-week period, however. With the assistance of U.S. Special Forces, CIA, and American air support, Northern Alliance commander Abdul Rashid Dostum seized Mazar-e Sharif by 5 November and his rival Ismael Khan took Herat on 11 November. The advance on Kabul started on 13-14 November as Northern Alliance forces under Fahim Khan broke south down the Shomali Plain, and a secondary front under Khan seized the city of Jalalabad on 14 November. Dostum and Khan then squeezed the city of Konduz in the north; it fell between 24 and 30 November.

During that time, there was some discussion in Ottawa about sending CF-18s as part of the air campaign. One option was to base these aircraft out of Kulyab in Tajikistan. Exploratory discussions suggested that the Army should provide a protective element, but then the idea of basing the IRF(L) at Kulyab gained traction as well. When Mazar-e Sharif fell, the CENTCOM Commander, General Tommy Franks, became interested in

using a Canadian battle group operating from Kulyab as part of the northern campaign. General Franks asked Deputy Chief of Defence Staff Admiral Greg Madison to plan a Canadian land forces contribution to Afghanistan at this point or in the spring.[32]

Following the accelerated collapse of Taliban resistance at Mazar-e Sharif, CENTCOM formally requested that the coalition partners consider providing forces for a stabilization operation there. General Franks was insistent that Mazar-e Sharif was an opportunity, a "test of coalition ability to get it together in real time." The IRF(L) battle group was a prime candidate, and CENTCOM asked for it to be ready by 1 December if possible. CENTCOM planners, caught up in the wildly accelerated timelines, told the Canadian planners that they had to be prepared to move quickly "if CF Land Forces are to play a significant part in the land campaign." Canadian planners shifted focus to look at placing CF-18 strike aircraft and the IRF(L) at Mazar-e Sharif or in Herat.[33]

On 13 November 2001, however, this all ground to a halt. First, Rashid Dostum, decided he did not want a large coalition footprint in Mazar-e Sharif and discouraged CENTCOM from sending forces. Second, French planners in Tampa, working with the Jordanians, had come up with a contingency plan to deploy their forces to Mazar-e Sharif before the Canadian planners could. Third, it looked as if Fahim Khan's Northern Alliance forces were about to move on Kabul. That was potentially destabilizing; the destructive events of 1992-1993 might be repeated, and in addition, an ethnic conflict might be triggered between the Tajik and Uzbek Northern Alliance forces on one side and the Pashtun-dominated anti-Taliban forces on the other. Planning in CENTCOM shifted to the potential insertion of a British brigade-sized force into Bagram Air Field with the intention of moving it into Kabul to stabilize the situation.[34]

Discussions then started between London and Ottawa: could the IRF(L) become part of the British force? The Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence were briefed on that option on 14 November, and the Prime Minister agreed to permit the deployment of Canadian land forces to Afghanistan. CENTCOM then formally requested a Canadian light infantry battalion for operations in Afghanistan.[35]

The Prime Minister agreed that several Canadian Forces objectives should be met in conjunction with this commitment. That guidance ultimately had long-term effects on Canada's involvement in Afghanistan and provided justification for later deployments. There were six objectives:[36]

1. Eliminate the Al Qaeda organization as a continuing terrorist threat.

2. Take appropriate military action to compel the Taliban to cease all support to, harbouring of, and cooperation with Al Qaeda.

3. Isolate the Taliban regime from all international support.

4. Bring Osama bin Laden and the leaders of the Al Qaeda organization to justice.

5. Address the immediate humanitarian needs of Afghanis [sic] in the region, ensuring where possible [that] it complements existing humanitarian operations.

6. Assist in the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

In effect, this became the Army's brief for Operation APOLLO and subsequent deployments to Afghanistan. Starting in 2001, everything the Canadian Army did in Afghanistan fit into this schema, in one way or another.

Just after the Canadian government announced that Canada would contribute land forces to the campaign, the British Bagram deployment ground to a halt. On 15 November, six blacked-out Royal Air Force C-130 transports loaded with Special Boat Service and Special Air Service personnel landed at Bagram Air Field, which resulted in a Mexican standoff with Fahim Khan's forces. Like Dostum in Mazar-e Sharif, Khan did not want excessive coalition scrutiny of his activities in and around Kabul.[37] While Canadian planners were working out the details of the Bagram deployment with their coalition counterparts, they were told that such a deployment was now "problematic" given the behaviour of the Northern Alliance forces. The British-led option was turned off on 19 November, but the possibility of deploying a Canadian infantry company with an American-led Bagram force remained alive – for the time being.[38]

The Emergence of the International Security Assistance Force

On 18 November 2001, CENTCOM planners realized that operations in Afghanistan could no longer be separated into Shaping, Decisive, and Stability operations; they were starting to blend. Bagram Air Field, for example, was a 'lily pad' for launching special operations forces direct action operations against Al Qaeda, but it also served as a base for a stabilization force that would ensure that ethnic conflict did not break out in the post-Taliban period. The idea that a 'coalition of the willing' separate from Operation ENDURING FREEDOM should handle the stabilization tasks separate from OEF gained traction in policy and planning circles, and that such a force should arrive within 60 days after the end of hostilities or after OEF extracted from Afghanistan. Somalia was currently in the sights of the CENTCOM planners, who wanted to deny Al Qaeda a safe haven. Most importantly, CENTCOM planners understood that the Afghans had to be involved in the

stabilization process, and that they were unlikely to accept a large influx of foreign troops. At that point, the possibility of deploying an American division with a corps headquarters had been under consideration, but now it was off the table.[39]

The idea remained unrefined for the time being, but the concept of a UN or other regional coalition handling the Phase IV objectives, i.e., stabilizing the country, was now also in play in Bonn, Germany.[40] Over at the UN, Lakhdar Brahimi presented a plan to rebuild Afghanistan, and by 14 November the UN Security Council had endorsed a plan to meet with Afghan power brokers and the international community to discuss post-war reconstruction. With the support of the United States, UN representatives flew to Kabul to talk to the Northern Alliance leadership and others. After a substantial amount of diplomacy, all of the non-Taliban factions agreed to meet in Bonn, Germany.

The details are discussed elsewhere,[41] but the basic plan was to establish an Afghan Interim Administration led by Afghans, garner international support and thus legitimacy for it, and stave off destructive factional violence between the victors. One issue in the Bonn discussions revolved around the sort of security architecture that should be created for this governance effort. From 25 November to 5 December, the factions and other interested parties hammered out a compromise. The UN would not deploy resources to assist Afghanistan in the absence of a non-U.S. commanded security force. The Northern Alliance faction – called the United Front in the talks – viewed the presence of a robust UN-led force in the country as inimical to its consolidation of power.

The result was the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force. Deliberately kept small by the Afghans so that it could not challenge the Northern Alliance for control of Kabul, ISAF was supposed to consist of 1 500 combat soldiers and 3 000 support personnel. ISAF's initial task was to ensure protection of international community and transitional administration personnel inside Kabul and at the vital Kabul International Airport. This was a far cry from what ISAF would evolve into over the next five years.[42] At the same time, the Bonn Agreement established a rudimentary strategy for post-Taliban Afghanistan, informally dubbed the 'Bonn Pillars.' (See Figure 1-1)

Establishing legitimacy by cooperative engagement in formulating a national government was one thing. But the reality was that the monopoly of coercive force needed to be in the hands of a government, hopefully one that was elected, and opponents to that process had to be neutralized. It was understood that the damage to Afghanistan's institutions was as catastrophic as it was dramatic, so several nations agreed to take the lead in the five key areas and assist the emergent Afghan administration in the process.[43] As we will see, this task proved to be overwhelming for the participants and had long-term effects.

Photo Credit: Author

The second coalition was the International Security Assistance Force, which emerged from the 2001 Bonn Agreement and was limited in scope to Kabul and environs. ISAF was subsequently 'NATO-ized' in 2003 to expand throughout the country.

Indeed, there were some concerns about what the relationship between Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and ISAF was supposed to be. Paul Wolfowitz from the Pentagon told Canadian planners that ISAF was not to interfere in any way with ENDURING FREEDOM operations or trump any of its campaign objectives. It was clear that the mission of destroying Al Qaeda and its Afghan infrastructure had absolute priority, not the activities of the emergent Afghan Interim Administration or its ISAF protection force. General Franks was concerned about coordination and de-confliction, so he established a planning team to address those issues. Canada was invited to join.[44]

An assessment of the situation in Afghanistan concluded that the Taliban's political influence, as a regime at least, would be eliminated within three months and that Al Qaeda's capabilities were seriously degraded. Pockets of both Taliban and Al Qaeda remained and had to be eliminated. There had been significant sensitive site exploitation; detailed analysis of Al Qaeda training, command, and other sites for strategic intelligence was underway but most of the top enemy leaders remained at large.

Photo Credit: Author

The Kabul Multinational Brigade was ISAF's main operational arm in Kabul in 2003-2005.

CENTCOM's mission shifted, at least on paper. The coalition was to[45]

1. destroy the Al Qaeda organization;
2. provide a stable environment for the Afghan Interim Administration;
3. facilitate humanitarian assistance; and
4. conduct counter-terrorism operations.

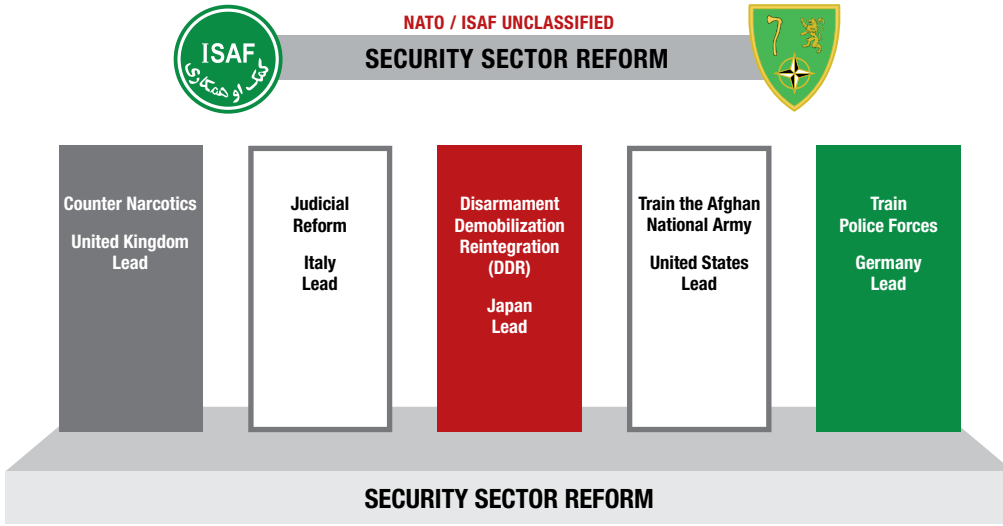

Figure 1-1: The Bonn Pillars

The new campaign objectives were to[46]

1. eliminate the threat of terrorist groups in Afghanistan;
2. eliminate or capture Al Qaeda and Taliban leadership;
3. set conditions so that terrorism [would] not be able to take root in Afghanistan again;
4. support the emerging government;
5. set conditions for decisive operations throughout CENTCOM area of operations;
6. prevent instability; and
7. be prepared to transition to multinational forces.

However, around mid-December, Canadian planners and their Commonwealth counterparts at CENTCOM started to express concerns. The consensus among the representatives was that CENTCOM was too focused on Phase III and "doesn't have a coherent plan that moves beyond military operations."[47] Another observer noted, "[the CENTCOM Commander in Chief] is totally focused on combat operations and seems to regard ISAF as an irritant rather than as an opportunity to pursue his Phase IV campaign objectives."[48] The idea that ISAF could be more than a stability force for the capital appears to have its origins in these informal discussions. However, there was explicit guidance from President Bush: "ISAF, in whatever form, is not to interfere with the conduct of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM."[49] There were two options tabled at that time: ISAF could be limited in its activities by a UN Security Council resolution, or it could be made a subordinate command of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. The first option was selected.

The United Kingdom accepted lead-nation status for ISAF in early December and set about trying to find contributor nations. At that point, a faction within the Department of Foreign Affairs wanted Canada to commit the IRF(L) to ISAF, in the mistaken belief that ISAF was a UN 'peacekeeping' mission, unlike the Operation ENDURING FREEDOM 'warfighting' mission. At the same time, British planners were not interested in a Canadian battalion but queried Canada about sending an engineer squadron. After discussion in Ottawa, committing to Operation ENDURING FREEDOM with a battalion of combat troops was deemed more important than sending a small engineer squadron to help others escort diplomats around Kabul. Canada would not contribute to ISAF – yet.[50]

Tora Bora

The Battle of Tora Bora in December 2001 also had ramifications for later Canadian operations in Afghanistan. The collapse of the Taliban regime and a retreat southward from Kabul resulted in the flow of Al Qaeda forces into a triangle between Khost, Gardez, and Kabul. Intelligence and targeting assets identified the Tora Bora area, an extremely mountainous and rugged region, as a likely sanctuary or part of a 'rat line' for leadership targets headed to Pakistan. CIA and U.S. Special Forces were covertly inserted into the mountains and identified a significant number of targets, which were engaged with joint direct attack munitions (JDAMs) bombs and AC-130 gunships as they presented themselves throughout early to mid-December. Signals intelligence determined that there was a high probability that Osama bin Laden and his entourage were located somewhere in the Tora Bora mountains. Every cave that could be identified was engaged with a variety of deep penetration bombs. Afghan forces, working with U.S. Special Forces and CIA teams, attempted to block off exit routes out of the mountains in order to catch the Al Qaeda leadership.

Despite the generation of significant enemy casualties, none of the leadership targets was caught. Although limited sensitive site exploitation operations were conducted in Tora Bora in January 2002 by U.S. Special Forces, the verdict was not in and the question remained as to where bin Laden and his second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri were. Had he been killed during Tora Bora? If they had escaped, where did they escape to? And how?[51]

The fallout from Tora Bora raised the question of how much trust should be placed in the sometimes unreliable Afghan groups working with special operations forces. Allegations of Al Qaeda bribing some tribal militias to let them get away were rampant in the media. There was significant criticism regarding the lack of conventional ground forces and speculation as to what might have happened at Tora Bora had a Ranger battalion or the 10th Mountain Division battalion based at Karshi-Khanabad in Uzbekistan been deployed to the fight.[52] The criticism had its effect and, in some ways, contributed to how the Canadian battle group would be employed in Afghanistan once it got on the ground.

The War in the South

The nature of the war in southern Afghanistan differed greatly from the war in the north.There was no organized, established conventional opposition to the Taliban regime, nor was there a counterpart to the Northern Alliance to support. A coalition had to be built from scratch – a classic special forces A team mission. Operational detachment Alphas (ODAs) were inserted into the region and, working with CIA assets, identified tribal groups that had grievances against the Taliban. These groups were approached, relationships were built, and support was brought in. The focal point of this effort tended to be tribal groups from the Durrani confederation of the Pashtuns, who opposed the Ghilzai-dominated Taliban. Eventually, Hamid Karzai and other tribal leaders were inserted to stimulate rebellion against the regime, particularly in Oruzgan province.[53]

In late October, U.S. Army Rangers parachuted in and raided an airfield in Helmand province, code-named RHINO. This facility was identified as part of a potential 'rat line' out of Afghanistan to the Gulf states which Al Qaeda's leadership might use. The Taliban protection element was wiped out, and the message was sent that Operation ENDURING FREEDOM was watching. There were a number of other raids conducted by JSOC in and around Kandahar at that time, including a daring but inconclusive raid into Mullah Omar's compound at Ghecko inside Kandahar City on 19 October.[54]

More and larger raids were planned using TF 58, a U.S. Navy-Marine Corps task force led by Marines Corps Brigadier General James Mattis. With the Taliban and Al Qaeda's collapse in the north, CENTCOM was determined to insert TF 58 into southern Afghanistan to establish a forward operating base. The idea was to interdict enemy movement into and out of the south. Objective RHINO was re-acquired this time by TF 58, which flew in

by helicopter from three bases in Pakistan. RHINO functioned as a forward operating base for JSOC, TF KBar, TF 64 (the Australian SAS Regiment) and British SAS forces. The special operations forces sortied from RHINO and conducted direct action and sensitive site exploitation in Helmand, Oruzgan, and Kandahar provinces in late November and throughout December 2001. TF 58 also sortied out with LAV-25s and conducted ambushes along Highway 1 in Kandahar province.[55]

Working with several Durrani confederation clans, U.S. Special Forces established a base area near Taktah Pol between Spin Boldak and Kandahar City. These forces then advanced up Highway 4, driving Al Qaeda and Taliban forces before them.[56] With TF 58 to the west of Kandahar City, and with friendly elements now operating within the city, the situation in the south was looking untenable for the enemy. Enemy forces retreating from Kabul in mid-December halted in the Ghazni, Paktika, and Khost areas instead of heading toward Kandahar. This, in part, established the conditions for the Tora Bora operations discussed earlier.

On 7 December 2001, a number of tribal leaders in Kandahar City defected to the coalition and turned the city over to Afghan and coalition forces. The U.S. Marines decamped from FOB RHINO and moved to take Kandahar Air Field (KAF) in conjunction with special forces and tribal forces. CENTCOM then advised Canada on 18 December that a light infantry battalion might be needed to secure KAF. The next day, Canadian commanders were authorized to plan for that mission. The formal request for forces arrived on 5 January 2002 and the decision to send the 3 PPCLI Battle Group was announced by the Canadian government on 7 January.[57]

Though disrupted and on the run, the enemy was still dangerous. The takedown of the Taliban regime had to be consolidated, and sensitive site exploitation missions still had to be conducted to determine the extent of Al Qaeda's global operations. There were indications that natural gas supplies in North America and Europe would be attacked by Al Qaeda cells if either Osama bin Laden or Mullah Omar were captured. There was data collected suggesting plans for mass casualty-generating attacks on American transit systems. In Afghanistan, 48 sites suspected of involvement in Al Qaeda's attempts to create chemical, biological, or radiological weapons were identified and had yet to be exploited for information. Evidence of a special type of shoe bomb for targeting passenger aircraft was found. There was credible intelligence that an Al Qaeda group was scheduled to attack Heathrow airport in the United Kingdom. Finally, terrorist attacks in India were assessed as part of a plan to convince Pakistan to shift forces, covering the border with Afghanistan, to offset a possible Indian response and thus assist with the escape of Taliban and Al Qaeda leadership.[58]

KAF was the critical facility in southern Afghanistan. It was the logistics hub of the coalition effort, and it had the only facilities capable of supporting sustained aerial, airmobile, and special operations. In addition to dealing with Al Qaeda, a new mission came down from CENTCOM on 28 December 2001: "Reduce the capability of the Taliban to reconstitute itself as a threat to the Afghan Interim Administration."[59] Special operations forces shifted to hunting Mullah Omar and his colleagues north of Kandahar City and in adjacent Oruzgan province. And that is when the 3 PPCLI Battle Group entered the war.

ENDNOTES

1. Joint Task Force Southwest Asia (JTFSWA) ASSESSREP, (19 September 2001).
2. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP, (25 September 2001).
3. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP, (28 September 2001).
4. George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), pp. 177, 207-208.
5. Douglas J. Feith, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), p. 49.
6. Ibid., pp. 50-51.
7. Ibid., p. 51.
8. Ibid., p. 55.
9. Both Tenet and Feith discuss this in their works but omit the specifics. Other works, particularly Douglas Farah and Stephen Braun's *Merchant of Death: Money, Guns, Planes, and the Man Who Makes War Possible* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2007); Daniel Byman, *Deadly Connections: States that Sponsor Terrorism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), and Gordon Corera, *Shopping for Bombs: Nuclear Proliferation, Global Insecurity, and the Rise and Fall of the AQ Khan Network* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) all provide insight into the problem confronting the administration at this time.
10. See Jim Defede, *The Day the World Came to Town: 9/11 in Gander, Newfoundland* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002).
11. As Lieutenant General Michael DeLong, USMC reminds us in *Inside CENTCOM: The Unvarnished Truth About the Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq* (Washington DC: Regnery Publishing 2004), p. 27.
12. See Sean M. Maloney, "Helpful Fixer or Hired Gun? Why Canada Goes Overseas," *Policy Options*, January 2001, pp. 59-65; Sean M. Maloney and Douglas L. Bland, *Campaigns for International Security* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), p. 22.
13. Tommy Franks (with Malcolm McConnell), *American Soldier* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), pp. 269-271.
14. Feith, *War and Decision*, pp. 75-77.
15. As discussed in detail in Gary Schroen, *First In: An Insider's Account of How the CIA Spearheaded the War on Terror in Afghanistan* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2005) and Gary Berntsen, *Jawbreaker: The Attack on Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2005).

16. Message DLFR to dl, "Warning Order 01-Potential Land Force Contribution to the War on Terrorism" (18 October 2001).
17. Ibid. The identification of the three types of forces is from Warning Order 01. The descriptions are the author's.
18. Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, p. 182.
19. DeLong, *Inside CENTCOM*, pp. 38-39.
20. Feith, *War and Decision*, pp. 97-98.
21. Ibid., p. 101.
22. Ibid., pp. 101-102.
23. Message DLFR to dl, "Warning Order 01-Potential Land Force Contribution to the War on Terrorism" (18 October 2001).
24. Handwritten notes by LCol Larry Zaporzan, "Courses of Action" (n/d). Contextual note: there was a scramble to rent the limited number of contract airlifters in the fall of 2001, so much so that Viktor Bout's air transport company(ies) that flew in support of both the Northern Alliance and the Taliban were being contracted by coalition forces. See Farah and Braun's *Merchant of Death*, Ch.11.
25. Message DLFR to dl, "Warning Order 01-Potential Land Force Contribution to the War on Terrorism" (18 October 2001).
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. JTFSWA ASSESSREP (26 October 2001).
29. DLFR to dl, "LF Contribution to Op APOLLO-Concept of Operations" (29 November 2001).
30. Ibid.
31. Sean M. Maloney, *Enduring the Freedom: A Rogue Historian in Afghanistan* (Washington DC: Potomac Books, 2005), pp. 48-50.
32. "Commander Canadian Joint Task Force South West Asia Operation APOLLO Rotation Zero Report-Op APOLLO Chronology" (19 April 2002).
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. CDS and DM to PM, "Canadian Forces' Objectives Related to Combating the Threat of Terrorism" (20 November 2001).
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41. The only examination of the origins of ISAF thus far is Sean M. Maloney, "ISAF: Origins of a Stabilization Force," *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol 4 No 2.

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44. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (4 December 2001); (S) SSS 10 G 3 3350-20 v. 3 CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (5 December 2001).
45. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (13 December 2001).
46. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (13 December 2001).
47. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (13 December 2001).
48. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (14 December 2001).
49. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (17 December 2001).
50. Maloney, *Enduring the Freedom*, pp. 57-58.
51. DeLong, *Inside CENTCOM*, pp. 54-56; Berntsen, *Jawbreaker*, Ch. 16-19.
52. See Philip Smucker, *Al Qaeda's Great Escape* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2004) and particularly Berntsen's *Jawbreaker*.
53. Feith, *War and Decision*, p. 120; Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, pp. 219-220.
54. Maloney, *Enduring the Freedom*, p. 48.
55. "Unclassified Documents from Marine Task Force 58's Operations in Afghanistan," *Strategy Page* (2002).
56. Maloney, *Enduring the Freedom*, pp. 202-204.
57. "Commander Canadian Joint Task Force South West Asia Operation APOLLO Rotation Zero Report-Op APOLLO Chronology" (19 April 2002).
58. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (4 November 2001); CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (6 November 2001); CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (11 December 2001); CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (12 December 2001); CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (1 January 2002).
59. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (28 December 2001).

OPERATION APOLLO, FEBRUARY-JULY 2002:

PRELIMINARIES

The decision by the Canadian government to deploy the 3 PPCLI Battle Group led to a flurry of activity from Ottawa, to Tampa, and Edmonton. The novelty of sending a Canadian army contingent to fight was not lost on the Canadian people and the media. All the while, the soldiers and their families had lived a precarious existence for nearly two months as options were weighed and the war on the ground in Afghanistan progressed.

In February 2002, the Operation APOLLO force was finalized as a battalion headquarters; two light infantry companies (with a third company from 2nd Battalion PPCLI added in March 2002); a direct fire support company (snipers, machine guns, TOW missile launchers); half of a recce squadron from The Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) equipped with Coyote surveillance vehicles; a reinforced combat engineer troop from 12 Field Squadron, 1 Combat Engineer Regiment; a mortar platoon manned by 1 Royal Canadian Horse Artillery; and a Forward Support Group to handle logistics, which itself consisted of 77 people drawn from nearly 15 units across Canada. Additionally, there was a signals platoon, which included a National Command, Control, and Information System Light Detachment for strategic communications,[1] and a Mobile Electronic Warfare Team section from 2 Electronic Warfare Squadron. Overall, the 3 PPCLI Battle Group consisted of 1 000 personnel.[2]

Because of the lack of Canadian strategic airlift, U.S. Air Force C-5B Galaxy and C-17 Globemaster III transports were used to move the battle group from Edmonton to Frankfurt am Main in Germany, to great public fanfare. C-17s equipped with defensive systems took over from there to Afghanistan.

LCol Pat Stogran and his recce party reached Kandahar on 14 January 2002. Almost every participant in the early days of Operation APOLLO was greeted with a similar scene on arrival: the C-17 would fly in at night, conduct a 'corkscrew' manoeuvre over KAF to disrupt any potential enemy anti-aircraft systems and then land at the blacked-out facility. The trashed international terminal was lit only by the glow of burning 50-gallon drums, where heavily armed, toque-wearing, dirty U.S. Marines were hunched over the flames warming their hands. It was a scene right out of a post-apocalyptic movie. When the main body arrived on 3 February, they were taken at night to a piece of bare ground and told to establish camp. There were initially no defensive works; sandbags and defensive stores were borrowed from the New Zealand SAS and the troops dug in using their entrenching tools and whatever else they could get their hands on.

Photo Credit: DND APD02 5000-139

The lack of Canadian strategic airlift resulted in dependence on U.S. Air Force C-5B and C-17 transports to deploy the Canadian battlegroup from Edmonton to Kandahar Air Field. It took over five years, or nearly the duration of the Second World War, to correct this deficiency.

The 3 PPCLI Battle Group operated as part of an American brigade: the 187 Brigade Combat Team (187 BCT) from the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), also known as TF Rakkasan.[3] 187 BCT was supposed to have three battalions rotating between security duties at KAF, security duties at a base in Pakistan, and force projection. Based at Kandahar, 187 BCT consisted of an engineer battalion, a logistics task force (the 626th Forward Support Battalion or FSB), an AH-64 Apache attack helicopter unit, and a transport helicopter unit equipped with CH-47 Chinook and UH-60 Blackhawks. The reality was that TF Rakkasan was short a battalion and that was where the 3 PPCLI Battle Group came into play: it became the third battalion in the brigade.[4]

LCol Stogran's Canadian chain of command went all the way back to Tampa, Florida, to Canadian Joint Task Force South West Asia, and then to Ottawa, while 3 PPCLI Battle Group was under TF Rakkasan's operational control in Afghanistan. However, there were additional strictures on the forward-deployed force. The Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, VAdm Greg Maddison, had already established a restrictive regime over operations in Afghanistan involving Canadian Special Operations Forces whereby any direct action operation or the cutting of any forces to allied organizations had to be approved on a case-by-case basis by the DCDS back in Ottawa. These restrictions were fallout from the 1993 Somalia affair and the subsequent inquiry into the activities of the Canadian Airborne Regiment.[5]

Photo Credit: DND ISD02-9506

LCol Pat Stogran, the Commanding Officer of 3rd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and Canadian contingent commander in Kandahar, briefs his staff.

The Canadian Forces could not fail again as it had in Somalia. Therefore, the CDS and the DCDS deemed that tighter controls were necessary to reduce political liability. Those controls were applied to LCol Stogran and 3 PPCLI, which was not a direct-action oriented SOF organization – and arguably did not need that level of intimate control from Ottawa. Those decisions served to constrain 3 PPCLI in its activities and that was something the Americans were not used to.[6] The restrictive regime established in 2001 remained in place well into 2004 during Operation ATHENA.

Kandahar Air Field: ENDURING FREEDOM's Vital Ground

KAF was vital ground not only in the war in Afghanistan but also in the larger conflict against Al Qaeda. This was critical context for the 3 PPCLI Battle Group's employment; it was not a matter of 'just' protecting an airfield. KAF, with its 10 000-foot runway, was one of a network of facilities that was critical in so many ways to the success of the war. In 2002, there were only three such facilities in coalition hands in Afghanistan: Bagram Air Field in the north; the smaller airfield at Khost; and Kandahar in the south. There were peripheral air bases in the adjacent countries that fed Operation ENDURING FREEDOM forces stationed inside Afghanistan. Everything that was needed to support the war against

the Taliban regime and Al Qaeda had to come in by air through this base network. The importance of the 3 PPCLI Battle Group's role in force protection at KAF tends to be underplayed because, comparatively, it was an unglamorous task. What tends to be forgotten is that the loss of the airfield or even its disruption would have been catastrophic and set back the coalition effort months, if not years.

Bagram, Kandahar, and Khost were 'launch pads' for various types of operations in that war. For the most part, those operations were conducted by special operations forces and, later, by conventional light infantry. KAF was situated next to Kandahar City, the largest city in southern Afghanistan and an age-old major transportation and trading hub for the Central Asia region, not just the country. Kandahar was the first city the Taliban seized in its march to power in the late 1990s and, thus, it also had psychological value. Pre-invasion Al Qaeda activity in Afghanistan was clustered in Jalalabad, Kabul, Khost, and Kandahar, with over 50 sites dedicated to training, research and development, and command and control. The seizure of KAF was, to put it bluntly, incredibly disruptive to both Taliban and Al Qaeda operations.

KAF afforded various special operations units a secure forward base. Previously, they had had to operate from Jacobabad in Pakistan; Karshi-Khanabad or 'K2' in Uzbekistan; Manas in Kyrgyzstan; or from ships in the Arabian Sea, all at a distance from Kandahar. Now the SOF were closer to their targets and thus could react more quickly. There was less exposure to air defence systems 'on the ingress' as flight times were shorter. Special operations personnel could rest and train in secure facilities, again closer to the action. Their logistics system was protected. All in all, having access to a protected KAF permitted a dramatically increased tempo of operations in the south.

By then, there were several aspects of the war superimposed on each other. First, there was the takedown of the Taliban regime, the 'shield' that protected the Al Qaeda forces and infrastructure in Afghanistan. Second, there was the direct engagement of Al Qaeda units and formations in Afghanistan that supported the Taliban. Third, there was the Al Qaeda infrastructure and leadership itself. Fourth, there was the need to engage the Al Qaeda networks conducting terrorism around the globe and their financial, logistics and recruiting elements.

The forces required to engage those four targets varied in type and number. As we have seen, U.S. Special Forces Operational Detachment Alphas worked closely with anti-Taliban groups in Afghanistan to overthrow the regime. CIA (also known as the 'Other Government Agency' or OGA) teams worked with the same groups to develop strategic intelligence on Al Qaeda in Afghanistan for targeting purposes. Other special operations forces, dubbed 'Other Coalition Forces,' included the JSOC, the CIA's Special Activities Division, and several unnamed, numbered organizations. The 'Other Coalition Forces'

were poised to act on information provided by the OGA. As the war broadened out, special operations forces from several NATO countries joined the fight, some working alongside the American special operations forces.

By the time 3 PPCLI arrived in Kandahar, the roll call of specialized activities was even longer. Special operations forces airlift was handled by the 3rd Battalion, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (3-160 SOAR), which deployed a proportion of its ten MH-60 and eight MH-47D helicopters to the airfield to support TF K-Bar. TF K-Bar consisted of a U.S. Navy SEAL unit; 3rd Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) (SFGA); and SOF from Canada, Norway, Denmark, New Zealand, and Germany. There was also TF-64, the Australian SAS Regiment unit that deployed back in 2001.[7]

The 12-man ODAs from 3rd Battalion, 3rd SFGA, worked closely with the anti-Taliban tribal elements in Kandahar and adjacent provinces. Its forward operating base was at KAF. These were the 'proxy' forces that destabilized and challenged the Taliban in the south back in 2001. The European TF K-Bar units conducted mostly strategic and special reconnaissance missions, with 3-160 SOAR performing the insertions. The SEALs and Canadians generally handled direct action and sensitive site exploitation missions.[8]

The JSOC contingent was called TF Green and included a squadron from the Combat Applications Group, better known to the public as Delta Force. The Naval Development Group, better known as SEAL team SIX, was TF Blue. There was also the Advanced Force Operations unit and Grey Fox, also known as the Intelligence Support Activity. Ranger teams provided protective elements (TF Red). CIA Special Activities Division and its intelligence apparatus were part of TF-5; elements from 2nd Battalion, 160th SOAR, supported those forces. At times, British SAS and SBS squadrons worked alongside TF-5 elements. TF-5 was mostly based out of Bagram; if it looked like a high value leadership target might be operating in the south, a 'package' drawn from those elements could be staged out of Kandahar.[9]

In essence, a lot of the machinery used to conduct the war against Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, and thus the basis for the larger global operations against the organization, was located at KAF and protected by Canadian forces. Because of its central location on the southern front, KAF also hosted numerous signals intelligence collection and analysis activities. Those included elements of a National Intelligence Support Team, a U.S. Marine Corps-led unit that supported TF 11 in its high-value target hunt.[10]

On the medical front, a Forward Surgical Team, a Preventative Medical Detachment and its associated logistics support was established in the west wing of the air terminal at the airfield.[11] Collectively, this was called "Charlie Med." Feeding the medical chain in the event of casualties was the role of other units stationed at KAF. The 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) battalions had dedicated 'dust off' medical evacuation UH-60 helicopters

with medics aboard, while the U.S. Air Force maintained a Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) unit at KAF. The CSAR unit had HH-60 helicopters, manned by Pararescue Jumpers who specialized in aircrew extraction in hostile environments. Another Air Force unit that specialized in the air evacuation of casualties back to hospitals in Germany was also stationed at KAF.[12]

KAF was the primary logistics hub for coalition forces in southern Afghanistan. Every conceivable item required by 5 000 troops had to be flown in by air, from vehicles to bullets to water, food and matches. And it all had to be stored and organized somewhere and then protected from the climate, looters, and the enemy.

Simply put, KAF was the lifeline and the brain for the coalition effort in southern Afghanistan. A single accurate 'stonk' from a multiple rocket launcher could have significant adverse effects on the larger ENDURING FREEDOM mission. Enemy infiltration or a raid into the support areas could shut down the air bridge, as could a successful man-portable surface-to-air missile strike on an inbound or outbound C-17. The protection of KAF and all of the resources stationed on it was laid in the hands of the Canadian battle group. That task was vital to the success of ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan.

Sensitive Site Exploitation: The Solid Base of Jihad

On the strategic front, pieces of the Al Qaeda puzzle collected in the Kandahar area and in eastern Afghanistan contributed to the larger picture: What was Al Qaeda capable of, globally? What other operations did it have in the pipeline? Or, in some cases, and just as importantly, what was the organization not capable of doing? Those pieces came from several sources: captured enemy personnel; seized documents and computers; and analysis of the remains of the jihadist training camps and supporting network infrastructure.

KAF also served as a way station and filter for captured enemy personnel. The base maintained a holding area, an interrogation facility, and a document exploitation facility (or DOCEX) all run by the U.S. Army Military Police and Military Intelligence units but augmented by allied and American intelligence and law enforcement agencies. There was a facility elsewhere for higher-ranking prisoners. In effect, both streams of prisoners caught in the south flowed through the base, from low-level Taliban soldiers to high-level Al Qaeda operatives. Depending on their importance, some went to Bagram, some were fed into the American intelligence system, and others remained at KAF, which rapidly became a critical hub for the intelligence effort against global terrorist groups.[13]

An example of this was the capture of Abu Zubaydah. In March 2002, the trilateral links between Bagram, Kandahar, and joint efforts in Pakistan resulted in the seizure of Zubaydah, a high value Al Qaeda leadership target. Zubaydah entered the CIA interrogation

programme and was whisked away to an undisclosed location where he was aggressively interrogated. Abu Zubaydah's closest associates were flown in and handled by the intelligence community at KAF.[14]

The exploitation of Zubaydah and his associates produced significant results when combined with the myriad of other pieces of information collected throughout Afghanistan. For example, an individual believed to be planning a radioactive 'dirty bomb' attack in the United States was apprehended in May 2002,[15] though he was in fact planning conventional attacks against civilian high-rise residences.[16] The individual who was "the primary communications link" between the Al Qaeda leadership and the 9/11 hijackers, was seized in Pakistan because of information gleaned at KAF. Other information gathered during sensitive site exploitation operations in Afghanistan, combined with other pieces of intelligence, led investigators to arrest a six-man Al Qaeda cell in Buffalo, New York, before it could mount an operation.[17]

Zubaydah, incidentally, had information on Al Qaeda support cells operating in Canada capable of acquiring Canadian passports so that operatives could enter the United States more easily in order to attack targets.[18] Zubaydah also confirmed that Al Qaeda had plans to attack targets in Canada.[19] Other information gathered on Al Qaeda operations suggested that a cell based in Canada attending a Canadian university biology and chemistry programme may have been part of a second wave of planned attacks after 9/11. Plans apparently involved the use of crop dusters to deploy chemical or biological agents, possibly anthrax.[20]

Photo Credit: Author

There were five major Al Qaeda training facilities situated in and around Kandahar Air Field and a further five support facilities in Kandahar City. These were bombed early on during Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and later exploited for intelligence purposes once ground forces arrived at KAF.

Indeed, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM revealed the breathtaking scope of the jihadist training system in Afghanistan. Al Qaeda and its allies maintained over 50 facilities dedicated to the mass production of terrorists with an intake of jihadists from over twenty countries, including Canada. An estimated 20 000 jihadists passed through the Afghanistan training system in the 1990s.[21] In addition to Canada, they deployed to countries as diverse as Chechnya, China, Morocco, Mexico, Spain, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Germany. (See Figure 2-1)

In essence, Al Qaeda was a central player in what amounted to a multinational jihadist culture that was incubated in these facilities. The Taliban maintained its own training facilities (these were seized or otherwise taken over from Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's organization in 1995-1996) but, by 2000, there was substantial integration among all jihadist groups. It was increasingly difficult by 2001 to determine where Al Qaeda stopped and the Taliban or the other groups started in this system. The exceptions included some of the groups that were more closely connected to the Pakistani security services but, even there, considerable overlap existed with Lashkar-e-Taiba, for example, or Harkat ul-Ansar in the training system.[22]

The situation reached the point where Al Qaeda and the other groups shared facilities, expertise, equipment, and personnel, almost interchangeably. For example, after 'basic training' elsewhere, Lashkar-e-Taiba sent its fighters to the Al Qaeda-controlled Derunta Camp near Jalalabad for advanced training in explosives.[23] Fighters from the Islamic Movement in Uzbekistan received SA-7 missile training and counter surveillance training in Kandahar from Chechen and Al Qaeda instructors.[24] Al Qaeda trained jihadists from several countries to fight alongside the Taliban in Taliban units as individual replacements at the Khana Gulam Bacha Guesthouse in Kabul[25] but also trained 'internationals' to fight as part of the conventional Al Qaeda 055 Brigade against the Northern Alliance.[26]

That said, Al Qaeda used the training system to identify committed individuals and recruit them for more specialized activities. Those facilities amounted to a system within a system which itself had layers and compartments. For example, numerous sources refer to the Al-Faruq Training Camp, which apparently existed in at least five different locations.[27] There was a large facility called Al-Faruq in Paktika province on the border with Pakistan, but the best analogy is that Al-Faruq was the equivalent of a university extension programme for advanced training for jihadists at several locations run by a number of groups as well as a basic training course for new jihadists. In effect, "Al-Faruq" was a cover name for a variety of facilities and activities.[28]

Operation ENDURING FREEDOM analysts were able to group the more secretive Al Qaeda activities in Afghanistan into several geographical areas and then raid and exploit them in 2002. First, there was Kabul; it housed Al Qaeda headquarters, alongside the Taliban leadership accommodations in the Wazir Akbar Khan district as well as at least five guest

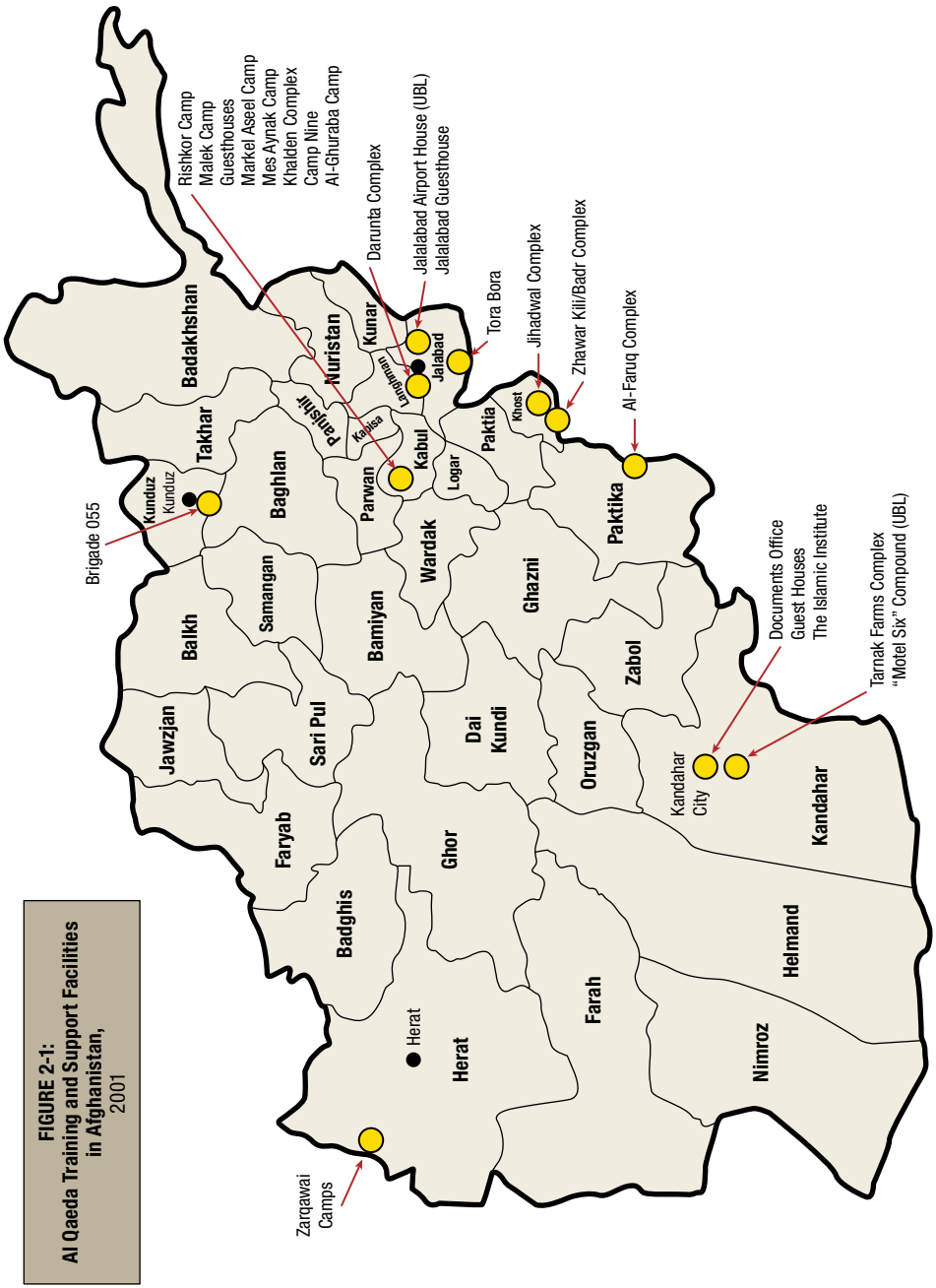

Figure 2-1: Al Qaeda Training and Support Facilities in Afghanistan, 2001

houses for personnel,[29] and Al Ghuraba Camp, the home of Abu Musab al-Suri, a man even more radical than bin Laden who pursued the acquisition of chemical, biological, and even nuclear capabilities for Al Qaeda. There was also an urban warfare training course run in the city. But then there was "Camp Nine." This was a special assassination training camp with a varied curriculum:

> [Source] stated during his training, he poisoned rabbits and also saw a video depicting a dog placed in a room with "smoke" that killed the dog. He also explained to [source] that he was trained in counter-surveillance techniques. (Analyst Note: [source's] training timeline coincides with detainee's reported training at the camp. [Source's] poison training is assessed to be similar to the experimentation with cyanide described by [source] and the poisoning of rabbits.[30]

Also in Kabul were the offices of Ummah Tameer-e-Nau (or UTN), a Pakistani 'humanitarian' non-governmental organization that was founded by Bashiruddin Mahmood, the man who ran the Pakistani plutonium processing reactor; a senior Pakistani Army artillery officer; and Hamid Gul, head of the ISI. Document exploitation conducted at this office after a raid confirmed connections between Al Qaeda and elements in the Pakistani nuclear weapons establishment.[31]

Another grouping involved Al Qaeda facilities including the Derunta complex near Jalalabad, which had chemical warfare training in its curriculum and where videos depicting the testing of chemical warfare agents on dogs were discovered. Derunta was characterized as

> One of the most important camps…located about eight miles from the eastern city of Jalalabad. Inside this complex were four sub-camps: Abu Khabab camp, where intelligence sources say chemicals and explosives were stored and terrorists were trained in how best to use them to produce the most casualties; Assadalah Abdul Rahman camp, operated by the son of blind cleric Omar Abdel Rahman (currently in jail in the U.S. for plotting to blow up the World Trade Center in 1993) and Hizbi Islami [sic] Camp, operated by a group of Pakistani extremists fighting in Kashmir; and, lastly, the Taliban Camp, where religious militia were trained and indoctrinated to fight the Northern Alliance.[32]

Photo Credit: DND AP2002-5617

Sensitive Site Exploitation: The Al Qaeda and jihadist training and support system in Afghanistan consisted of over forty facilities, some in remote areas. Tracking down and examining them for intelligence data helped provide strategic planners with the data on the enemy's global capabilities.

Derunta was filled with jihadists from the Philippines, Turkey, Egypt, and Malaysia and trained people going to fight in Bosnia, Chechnya, and Azerbaijan;[33] it was well known among jihadists for its expertise in explosives, poisons, and "clock bomb" training.[34] Of particular interest to the intelligence people were the Al Qaeda cells in Bosnia, who were planning to disrupt the fragile peace that the Canadian Army along with its NATO allies helped establish after 10 years of UN and NATO operations in that region. Those particular plots, planned and funded by Al Qaeda's operations office, were disrupted before they could take place.[35]

The third grouping pertained to the facilities in and around Jalalabad. The House of the Algerians was noted for its bomb-making training, especially that involving the use of electronics. "J-Bad" housed facilities for "Maghrebis" (northern Africa-based groups). Most importantly, the Airport House was the bin Laden family house in Jalalabad and served as one of his headquarters.[36]

Located southeast of Tani, in the mountains on the Pakistan border near Khost, the Zhawar Kili Camp complexes were longstanding jihadist training facilities that had been struck ineffectively in an American cruise missile attack in 1998. Six facilities were considered to include "two of the most important training centres," Badr-1 and Badr-2, with an estimated training capacity of 350 fighters. Generally, the Badr camps trained fighters destined for Bosnia and Chechnya. Another camp in the complex was part of the Haqqani network and was connected to madrassas in North Waziristan. Al Qaeda was essentially a 'lodger unit' in Zhawar Kili.[37]

Over in Herat province were the mysterious facilities run by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Ostensibly a Taliban facility, the Ziarat Jah Camp was used to train Chechens. Other Al Qaeda camps in the area were apparently used to stockpile nuclear material. Arabs from 18 countries, particularly Lebanese, Jordanians, and Iraqis, trained there on small arms, explosives, and chemical weapons. One team trained there tried to set off a chemical weapon in Amman, Jordan, in 2004 that would have killed an estimated 80 000 people, but the plot was foiled.[38] Only Osama bin Laden himself could authorize any visits to these facilities.[39] Most importantly, the need to determine the dimensions of Al Qaeda's interest in nuclear weapons and nuclear material was of primary concern to OEF intelligence personnel and al-Zarqawi topped the list of Al Qaeda leaders to be apprehended. Information was developed that Al Qaeda personnel here were apparently "involved in attempting to procure a nuclear weapon" through a radical group of scientists and officers in Pakistan and that at least two Russian scientists who had nuclear weapons expertise were in contact with Al Qaeda.[40]

Finally, there were the Al Qaeda facilities in and around Kandahar province. It was in those facilities that the 9/11 attacks were planned by Osama bin Laden and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, and it was there that the hijackers trained for the mission and the logistics were based. For example, the Document Office provided forgeries for the hijackers.[41]

One jihadist, trained in the Al-Faruq training system, stayed at jihadist guest houses in Kandahar City and used fake passports made at the Document Office in Kandahar to travel to Canada to contact and recruit jihadist cells in 2000. Another jihadist, when apprehended using data from Kandahar, was also determined to have used Canada as a base. When asked why Canada, he replied, "Canada accepted everyone."[42]

The "Mall Six Complex" was the main Al Qaeda administration base, which also housed bin Laden, his deputies, their families, and their bodyguards. This collection of mud brick houses in five rows of six was one kilometre from KAF. Only Al Qaeda personnel were permitted entry.[43]

The Abu Zubaydah Camp at Tarnak Farms, 10 kilometres south of KAF, was also known as "The Commando Camp" by the jihad community. The facility had nearly 100 buildings and a large range. The curriculum included surface-to-air missile training; escape and evasion; urban warfare; mountain, desert and jungle training; explosives; and sniping, poisons and chemical training.[44] One surface-to-air missile team trained there was involved in a failed attempt to shoot down an Israeli airliner in Mombasa.[45]

The airport itself was used for terrorist scenarios involving airliners and airports. Surface-to-air missile training was conducted on specialized ranges. Al Qaeda's Kandahar facilities included what captured personnel referred to as 'The Chemical Laboratory' "where approximately 40 to 50 insurgent fighters received training while they stayed at the al-Ansar guesthouse…. Experiments were conducted at the laboratory including explosives and chemicals to be used as poisons, choking agents, and blister agents."[46] And then there was the Al Qaeda anthrax development programme adjacent to the laboratory.[47] As it turned out, there were two parallel but separate Al Qaeda programmes developing weaponized anthrax in Kandahar, one led by a Pakistani scientist and another by a Malaysian Army captain. There were linkages between one of these projects and a cell based at a Canadian university.[48]

An important project under development in Kandahar since 1999 involved "nuclear related explosive experiments in the desert" by senior Al Qaeda leader Abd al Aziz al-Masri.[49] This was likely some form of radiological dispersal device testing. In later years, Kutchi nomads made reference to 'Pakistanis' that made 'big explosions' in the Registan or 'Reg' Desert that caused 'a drought.' Some form of chemical was also employed against people in the desert that made the targets bleed from all of the orifices in their head.[50]

Another example of how important KAF was involved a sensitive site exploitation mission conducted against an Al Qaeda camp two hours east of the base in February 2002. During the course of the operation, an Al Qaeda 'conduct after capture' manual was recovered and exploited. Those documents were used during the 2003 interrogation of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Al Qaeda's operations officer, to offset his resistance to interrogation. From those interrogations, an Al Qaeda operative planning to conduct other terrorist attacks in the United States was intercepted and captured.[51]

There were numerous Al Qaeda operations in various stages of conceptualization or implementation when Operation ENDURING FREEDOM intervened. Those included a plan to ram a passenger airliner into Library Tower in Los Angeles sometime in late 2001; an operation in late December 2001 to attack ships at anchor in Singapore that was thwarted by the capture of the Al Qaeda team sent to do the job; the 2002 attempt to blow up tankers passing through the Strait of Gibraltar, which also led to the apprehension of another Al Qaeda team; and the 2002 operation to attack Heathrow Airport, Canary Wharf, and Big Ben with hijacked airliners.[52] Most importantly, an Al Qaeda overseas operations planning and training cell was eventually uncovered; the cell relocated from Kandahar to Shakai, Pakistan, and set about developing a new series of overseas plots, which were disrupted or did not come to fruition for a variety of reasons.[53]

Almost none of the information on the jihadist training system and the Al Qaeda support structure was known by the countries engaged in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM until it was revealed throughout the course of operations in 2002. Without a secure operating base in southern Afghanistan to conduct site exploitation and identify detainees, it is likely that none of that information would have come to light and that plots as deadly as 9/11 or worse would have occurred in North America and elsewhere.

Securing Kandahar Air Field

On arrival on 15 February 2002, 3 PPCLI Battle Group was immediately tasked with the perimeter defence of KAF. The threat assessment in Afghanistan indicated that the situation was unstable. Prominent Al Qaeda leaders, including Osama bin Laden, were still loose, as were the main Taliban leaders Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, Mullah Akhtar Osmani, and Mullah Mohammed Omar. Jalaluddin Haqqani, of the Haqqani tribal network, was somewhere in Khost. There were reports of an assassination plot against the Afghan Interim Administration leader Hamid Karzai. Significantly "rumours of an attempted Taliban resurgence continue to surface but are proving hard to verify…the latest incidents in Kabul may indicate the re-emergence of a Taliban command and control capability, but it will be some time before it becomes fully operational."[54]

The existing KAF defensive plan was rudimentary and expedient – some of the positions were only 20 metres away from the runway itself and did not have interlocking fields of fire. For example, a Marine infantry battalion had originally seized the airfield, dug their initial defensive positions, and then a U.S. Army infantry battalion replaced them and made some modifications, but neither unit was emplaced for the long haul. There were three sectors: Blue was north of the runway, White was the southwestern section, and Red included the terminal and southeastern section, plus the ammunition storage area, which was between Blue and White. KAF was a hazardous place; there was unexploded ordnance everywhere in addition to minefields dating back to the 1980s, as well as aircraft of all types, shapes, and sizes manoeuvring around the ramps and runways. (See Figure 2-2)

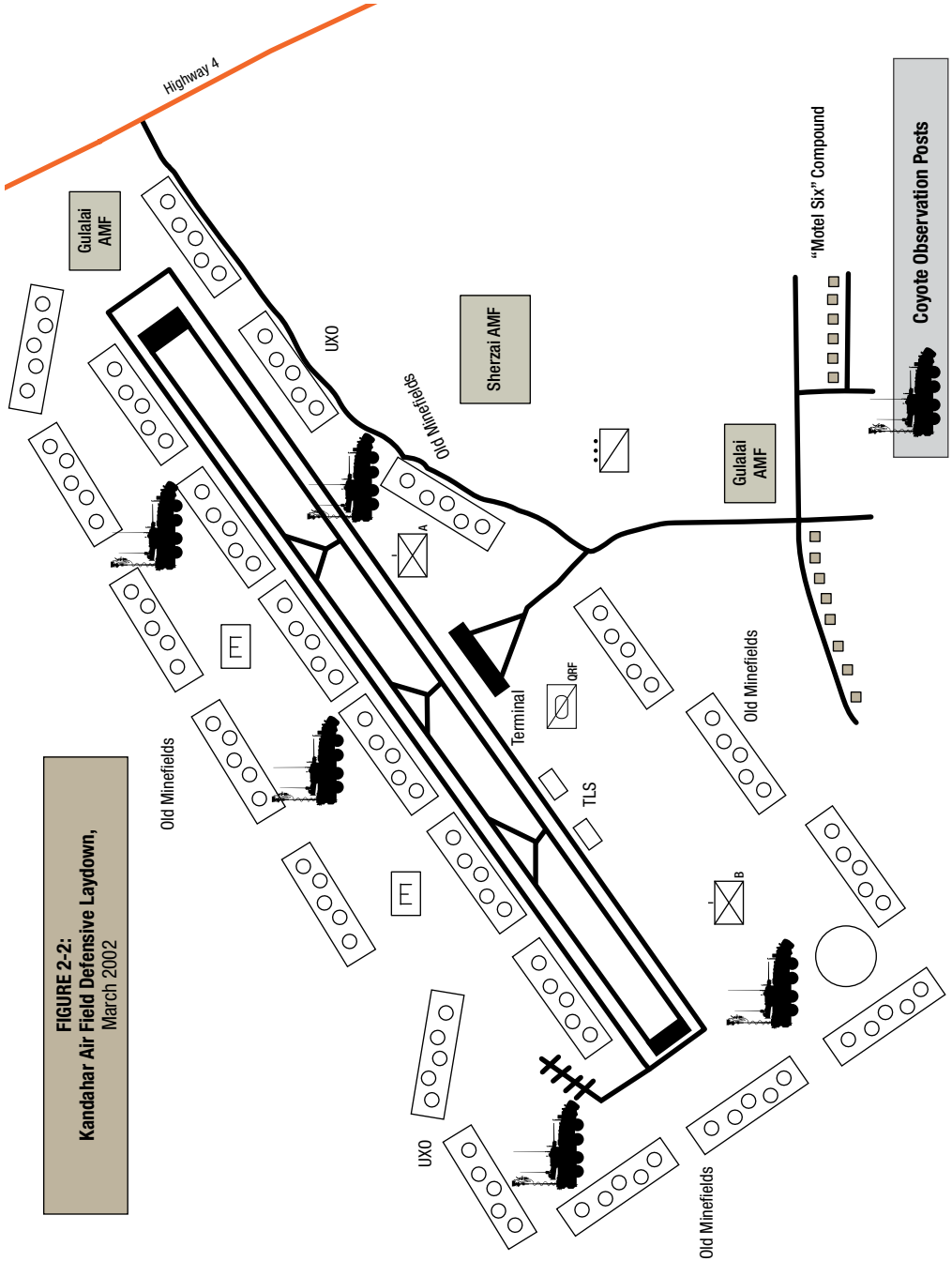

FIGURE 2-2:
Kandahar Air Field Defensive Laydown,
March 2002

Figure 2-2: Kandahar Air Field Defensive Laydown, March 2002

Photo Credit: Author

One of the many fortifications constructed by Canadian and American engineers on the perimeter of Kandahar Air Field in 2002. This example was photographed in 2007 long after that perimeter had been dramatically extended to house over 17 000 personnel.

3 PPCLI Battle Group was thrown into the breach within 24 hours. B Company, led by Maj Mike Blackburn, went into the White positions, and A Company, led by Maj Sean Hackett, took over Red sector. Maj Rod Keller's 12 Field Squadron, acting as infantry, took over Blue. Maj Tom Bradley and Recce Squadron arrived and started mobile patrols with their Coyote vehicles. They were joined by a platoon of U.S. Army TOW missile Hummers equipped with thermal imagery systems. Once the lay of the land was established, Recce Squadron developed a detailed surveillance plan for the Coyotes. The squadron was equipped with 12 Coyotes that were split into a Quick Reaction Force Troop and a Surveillance Troop. The Surveillance Troop dug in next to the infantry companies and engineers and then set up their mast-mounted sensors at five locations on the KAF perimeter. This gave the KAF defenders ground night observation capability out to nearly 25 km, rather than the 5 km range capability that the American units possessed.[55]

Photo Credit: DND APD02 5000-133c

Coyote recce and surveillance vehicles from The Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) provided all-round coverage of Kandahar Air Field with their mast-mounted systems, freeing up nearly a battalion of United States infantry initially assigned to the task.

The importance of the Coyotes' presence at KAF cannot be understated. They permitted the defenders to reduce the number of personnel dedicated to point defence of the airfield, which freed up those troops to deploy outside the wire elsewhere on operations. The long-range sensors and ability to direct accurate fire gave the defenders increased standoff, which in theory forced any potential enemy with a direct or indirect fire system away from the base, thus reducing their accuracy and decreasing their chances of striking something vital. In one instance, the improved capacity saved the lives of Afghan civilians as the Coyotes were able to determine that they were not a threat, and alerted other units not to engage. Such an engagement could have had dire consequences for the OEF-Afghan relationship.[56]

Photo Credit: DND IS2002-0092a

3 PPCLI Battle Group was a light infantry organization and as such did not bring a full complement of vehicles. Borrowed Humvees were used in patrolling and for civil-military cooperation tasks.

An ad hoc joint Canadian-American Electronic and Signals Intelligence Warfare Team was also established early on. Members of 2 EW Squadron and the Canadian Forces Information Operations Group, with their specially equipped vehicle and mobile teams, worked with American teams from both conventional and special forces. The U.S. Army teams with their PROPHET data collection and processing systems operated in an uncoordinated fashion at first, but when the American commanders realized the capabilities of 2 EW personnel, they put the Canadians in charge of coordinating signals intelligence and

electronic warfare activity relating to the defence of the airfield. This joint organization had 8 Canadians and 24 Americans. Canadian mobile teams worked with American, German, Australian, Norwegian, New Zealand, and United States SOFs, while the American Mobile Electronic Warfare Teams worked with Recce Squadron's QRF patrols in the air field's perimeter, intercepting and then responding to "hits."[57]

In time, the Americans emplaced their Remotely Monitored Battlefield Sensor (REMBAS) system on the perimeter. One of those resulted in the capture of an insurgent and the seizure of extremely lethal RPO-A thermobaric munitions – weapons capable of generating incredible blast effects. The increased number of manned and unmanned surveillance systems on and over the airfield, including an over-the-horizon radar from U.S. Marine Corps, demanded better coordination and deconfliction. Maj Mark Campbell, OC Support Company, created an information, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance (ISTAR) matrix to coordinate all of the systems, which significantly improved this chaotic state of affairs.

Similarly, the number of engineering assets on the airfield, which now included the bulk of a U.S. Army light engineer battalion, a Canadian combat engineer squadron, and Norwegian and Croatian demining and unexploded ordnance disposal crews, demanded better coordination. Using the doctrinal Canadian Engineer Support Coordination Centre as a basis for this, Maj Rod Keller and his small staff were able to significantly improve coalition engineering coordination at KAF.[58]

3 PPCLI Battle Group also developed close connections with Afghan forces that were part of the security plan. Local anti-Taliban forces in the region coalesced around two rival leaders – Commanders Gul Agha Sherzai and Haji Gulalai. Their forces were collectively called the Afghan Militia Forces (AMF). The AMF was lightly equipped but highly mobile. The Sherzai and Gulalai AMFs were hired to provide a layer of security outside of that provided by the perimeter forces. In time, they also occupied security towers alongside Canadian and American soldiers. Their initial liaison with coalition forces was through U.S. Special Forces, but as 3 PPCLI Battle Group came on line, they developed a relationship with the Canadians through the Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) officer, Capt Alex Watson, and with Recce Platoon. The AMF accompanied battle group patrols and operations related to the 'extended perimeter' (that is, everything outside of the immediate KAF security perimeter). (See Figure 2-3)

An example was Operation CLEAN SWEEP, a cordon and search of the Hajji Mohammad Shah Kalay region, north of the airfield in June 2002. Afghan information indicated that there was a large heavy-weapons cache in the community. An engineer section and a rifle section accompanied a platoon (later increased to more than a company) from the Gulalai militia while a quick reaction force from Recce Squadron, AH-64 attack helicopters, and

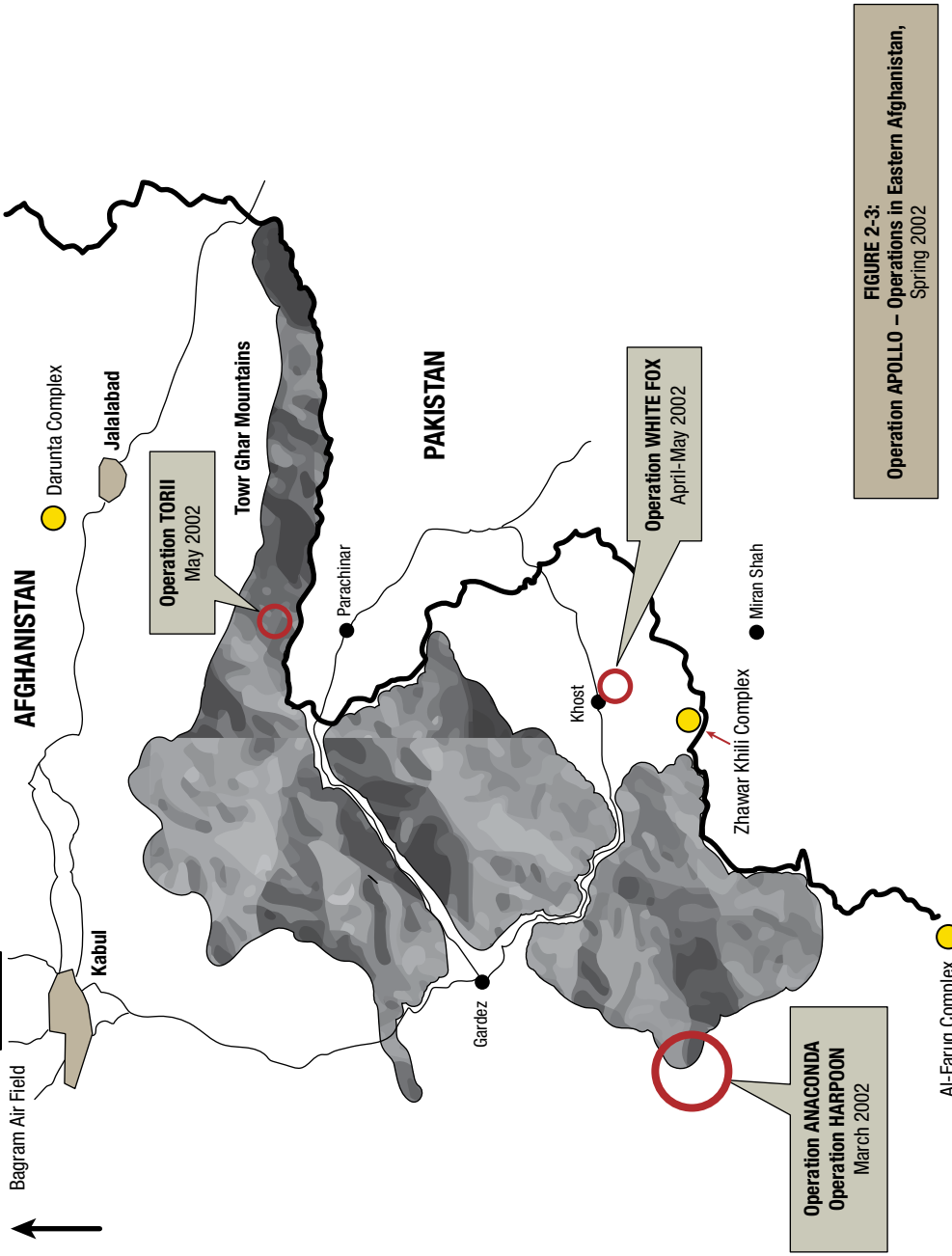

Figure 2-3: Operation APOLLO – Operations in Eastern Afghanistan, Spring 2002

UH-60 MEDEVAC helicopters remained in the background. Though the search was extensive, nothing was found. This led the battle group to believe that there were other Afghan motives behind the operation.

Another significant operation was GREY HUSKY on 7 April 2002. Intelligence sources suggested that a BM-21 multiple-rocket launcher was hidden in Arghistan district east of KAF and that enemy forces might move it into position to 'stonk' the airfield. Elements of Recce Squadron, Recce Platoon, and the AMF deployed out to Arghistan to locate and seize the weapon and to demonstrate the coalition forces' freedom of movement. The weapon was not found but the message was conveyed. Other than routine movements back and forth to Kandahar City KAF coalition forces at this point rarely deployed there but SOF operated in the city for significant periods. KAF was a 'launch pad' for special operations forces direct action and airmobile operations conducted elsewhere, so excursions, such as GREY HUSKY, were significant events.

Canadian QRFs also responded to any serious incident in the protective zone around the airfield. One of these involved an accident that killed four American personnel as they were disarming a rocket stash. A section from B Company handled the initial response and the clean-up. In a separate incident, three Rangers were killed in the Tarnak Farms training area when setting off either unexploded ordnance or a booby trap. In another incident, a U.S. Army AH-64 Apache went down; a QRF led by Capt Jay Adair secured the site. In another case, a Canadian platoon, a forward observation officer/forward air controller (FOO/FAC), and a medic were tasked with escorting the investigation team examining the crash of an MC-130 Combat Talon aircraft that went down near Band-e Sardeh in June 2002. The team was inserted by CH-47 and extracted without incident.

Canada's first abortive foray into interagency cooperation also occurred in the context of KAF security. Enemy surface-to-air missile teams could infiltrate Afghan villages on the KAF flight path. Little contact had been made with the populations in those areas, so Capt Alex Watson was tasked with generating what was at the time called a humanitarian aid plan. Capt Watson subsequently developed a relationship with the communities northwest of KAF. LCol Stogran saw the inherent benefits of the plan and requested $50 000; the request went to Ottawa to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) which in turn promptly refused to have anything to do with the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan. No amount of high-level cajoling could get CIDA to budge, so LCol Stogran put requests out to military families back in Edmonton for clothes and other supplies. These were put into the resupply chain. Capt Watson, in a hastily tailored civilian suit, was sent to Dubai to meet with expatriate Afghan businessmen and others to raise aid funds. In time, Capt Watson was able to have wells drilled, a school built, and other local schools refurbished, all in critical communities surrounding KAF.

Fundamentally, though, there was a lot of inactivity and boredom in the KAF protection task. The threat dropped to "low" as time went on and it became apparent that the enemy was not at the gates. But was this a critical task? Yes. Was it a vital ground? Yes. Was it exciting? No. It was hot, and it got hotter into the spring and summer with temperatures climbing to the high 40s. With the heat came snakes, spiders, and scorpions. The terrain was drab. There were few inhabitants. Accommodations consisted of two-man nylon crew tents set up on rocky ground. Morale, welfare and recreation consisted of the "Flintstone Gym." The food was uninspiring. Communications back home were sporadic. It was noisy, as KAF was one of the busiest airfields in the world. Sleep was difficult unless one was thoroughly exhausted. In time, even the coalition and Tier I special operations forces got bored and accompanied Canadian patrols in and around the airfield perimeter. On one occasion, the KSK (German Special Forces) operators were in the back of a Bison armoured personnel carrier that struck a mine but there were no casualties.

The situation started to change during the tour, however, as warnings of potential rocket attacks increased. There was a notable increase in coalition and Afghan vehicle mine strikes on patrol roads, which prompted increased surveillance tasks. Two members of the Gulalai militia died in one attack, while the wounded were tended to by Canadian and American medics. On another occasion, Gulalai's compound was targeted and the ammo supply was blown up. Intelligence indicators suggested it was an inside job by an agent.

The first wispy visages of the insurgency that would later engulf southern and eastern Afghanistan were recorded by analysts during this time. A major SOF direct action mission in Deh Rawod, Oruzgan Province killed fifteen enemy and netted twenty seven with knowledge of leadership movements. That information led to subsequent successful direct actions throughout Kandahar City thus attenuating the fledgeling insurgency. Another raid captured Mullah Omar's brother. The Taliban's response was to post leaflets in public places in Helmand province and Kandahar province calling for resistance. Mullah Omar directed the dispersion of remaining weapons stocks to those fighters who wanted to join him.[59]

At the same time, Al Qaeda operatives were deliberately aggravating inter-tribal feuds in Gardez and Khost to undermine attempts by the Afghan Interim Administration to assert control in the area.[60] Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin (HiG) organization was also believed to be reconstituting for operations in Kabul.[61] And, ominously, there were violent protests against Afghan Interim Administration poppy eradication operations in Nangarhar and Oruzgan provinces. A decision was made by the AIA to avoid poppy eradication in Helmand province out of fear that it would affect the counterinsurgency campaign by driving the population into the arms of the former government-turned-insurgents.[62]

Supporting Operation APOLLO

Logistics support for the battle group in Afghanistan fell on the shoulders of two organizations: the battalion Administration Company and the Forward Support Group, under the command of Maj Colin Blair. The FSG consisted of 77 personnel, including drivers, traffic techs, 'posties,' a supply platoon, and a signals element drawn from numerous units across Canada.

The FSG's relationship with TF Rakkasan 626th FSB was superb. Arrangements worked out between Maj Colin Blair and Lt Col Tom Pirozzi, the 626th commander, included the pooling of rations and the ration site maintenance and control, refueling, vehicle maintenance, ammunition accounting, storage and protection. Canadian logisticians and technicians worked alongside their American counterparts in all of those areas. The ammunition storage area was particularly risky, as it lay on the edge of the perimeter. Three Canadian ammo techs and their American counterparts were responsible for the protection and maintenance of the site – the Canadian signals personnel even ran a landline out to the site so that the team could communicate with the FSG. In all cases, this gave the opportunity for Canadians to conduct on-the-job training in non-traditional areas. For example, Canadian refueling personnel from the FSG assisted in refueling U.S. Air Force C-17 aircraft and U.S. Army CH-47 and AH-64 helicopters in addition to Canadian equipment. The FSG contributed to improving American accountability, especially when it came to fuel consumption rates and teaching spreadsheet employment.[63]

Another critical area of cooperation was in the handling of the water point. 12 Field Squadron brought a reverse osmosis water purification unit (ROWPU) and personnel to operate it. The 626th FSB also deployed water purification equipment but had few trained personnel to use it. The Canadian ROWPU team ran the water point using both countries' equipment as necessary. An experimental bagging unit was tested but the heat burst the bags and soldiers reverted back to canteens and bottled water.

The removal of human waste is a significant challenge for any military force deployed into an austere environment. If this activity is not performed effectively, disease, insects, and rodents can cripple the strongest fighting formation – and they have throughout military history. When the Canadian battle group and TF Rakkasan arrived, they were dismayed by the sanitary practices of the former occupants of the airfield. Little or no attempt had been made at long-term waste disposal. The supply techs from the FSG supply platoon scrounged wood and saws in order to fabricate outhouses, complete with the half-moon cut into the doors. Americans who saw the Canadian-modified facilities put in a request for the Canadian "carpentry section" to build more but, to their surprise, there was no carpentry section; this was just a Canadian initiative.[64]

The U.S. Army logistics system was able to get a shipment of plastic portable toilets in on a C-17, but they only came in six at a time. The main issue was not the number of 'Blue Rockets'; rather, it was the lack of equipment to pump them out and then the lack of a location to dump the human waste produced by over 3 000 people on a daily basis. The FSG with its global contacts and the engineers from 12 Field Squadron came to the rescue.[65]

The Joint Staff in Ottawa did not initially believe that the request for "shit suckers" was genuine and did not entertain it at the time. The FSG had to put in a formal Request for Forces through Tampa to get the ball rolling. At the same time, and working with 626th FSB, the U.S. Air Force was convinced that the vacuum machines were a force protection issue and agreed to deploy a C-17 in order to pick up the vacuum machines and deliver them to KAF on a priority basis.[66]

Through informal contacts, the FSG personnel knew that there were two vacuum systems pre-positioned at a site near Brindisi, Italy. The machines had been used to support Canadian operations in the Balkans. A U.S. Air Force C-17 was dispatched and the vacuum machines were brought to KAF. As they were not self-propelled, 626th FSB provided two trucks. The resulting Canadian-American configurations were dubbed "Piglet" and "Pooh."

As the FSG and 626th vehicle technicians figured out how to mount the vacuum systems on the 'SSTs' ("Shit Sucker Trucks"), Sgt Mark Pennie from 12 Field Squadron worked on the leach pond. The engineers were tasked to dig a circular structure with several pie-like segments. Human waste was progressively put through each segment to clean it as much as possible. The request was sent to the CIMIC officer, Capt Alex Watson, to acquire two live chickens. After delivery from the market in Kandahar City, the chickens had their throats cut and were thrown into one of the grey water-filled segments. The bacteria from the demised chickens assisted with the chemical breakdown of the human waste at that stage in the process. Sgt Pennie was subsequently awarded the Meritorious Service Medal for his operation of the reverse osmosis water purification unit, but many Canadians and Americans at KAF thought that it should have been awarded for his plan for the leach pond.[67]

Once on the ground in Kandahar, the FSG was supposed to link to a logistics system that stretched all the way back several thousand miles to Canada – without a supporting port, which had been the norm in Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Everything had to come in by air. The means by which it would do so, however, was complicated by the convoluted planning process at many levels and by the uncertainty that reigned throughout the summer of 2002 with regards to the battle group mission. There were multiple entities prepared to feed the National Support Element. First, there were the SLOC or Strategic Lines of Communication, an entity that consisted of 1 General Support Battalion and 1 Service Battalion personnel operating out of Qatar. Their task was to receive two ships bearing 60 days of stocks. Then there was the ILOC or Integrated Line of Communication, a Cold War arrangement

with the Americans whereby Canadian material is fed into the American airlift system and deposited at a forward site. The North American end of the ILOC was Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, with Kandahar and Bagram Air Fields as the forward sites. Eventually, Camp Mirage stood up in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with its Canadian C-130 Hercules transports. However, the FSG was told that this was a navy and air force support base and that they were not to use it or make requests of the logistics units deployed there; they were to rely on the SLOC in Qatar and the ILOC.[68]

If the Canadian logisticians needed an item, the request chain was somewhat confusing. In theory, the FSG had to deal with the J-4 at JTF South West Asia in Tampa, who then communicated with the Associate Deputy Minister Material/J-4 in Ottawa to arrange for the required items to be fed into the ILOC if they could not be fulfilled from the SLOC stocks in Qatar. The FSG staff also got requests for information from some logistics entity in Kuwait but were not sure where they fit into the scheme of things. That was the ideal structure. For practical purposes, there were serious problems, however. First, there was the SLOC. No status of forces agreement existed between Canada and Qatar, so the Canadian personnel were confined to the base and were restricted in what they could do. The ships were not permitted to unload at Qatar, so the 60 days of stocks could not be drawn on. Second, there was the ILOC. The stream took at least 30 days from request to delivery. This wasn't a matter of American preference of their own needs over Canadian requirements as some alleged–the American supply chain ran all the way from Afghanistan through Europe to Dover to California, where American stocks were warehoused and it took time to move materiel through the system. This put the FSG in a bit of a bind and forced it to take "Radar O'Reilly-like" expedient measures to ensure that the battle group was supplied with what it needed to conduct operations in Afghanistan. For example, the FSG Operations Officer, Capt Marjorie Coakwell, sent separate emails to all of the Canadian logistics entities; whoever replied positively first, she dealt with. There appeared to be no hierarchy to the system. On one occasion, critical spares for Coyote vehicles were needed immediately and none of the logistics groups were responsive. As the DHL courier company flew into KAF with AN-12 transports, the Canadian logisticians used DHL to courier the spares from Montreal forward to Afghanistan. This took four days instead of several weeks.[69]

In time, Canada negotiated a secret arrangement with the United Arab Emirates to use Minhad Air Base as a logistics and personnel way station. Dubbed Camp Mirage, the Canadian contingent was forced to maintain a low profile. In effect, strategic airlift that could not operate in hostile airspace, such as the CC-150 Polaris aircraft flew into Minhad, and the personnel and equipment were transferred to Canadian CC-130 Hercules equipped with defensive systems for the flight into KAF. Camp Mirage eventually was called the Theatre Support Base manned by the Theatre Support Element.

The Canadian SOF organization had its own dedicated logistics capability and its own airlift. The FSG technically did not have access to it, but an informal arrangement was made between individuals from the two organizations so that they could provide low-level and expedient support to each other on small or critical items. Generally, however, the SOF remained a separate entity.

The near-elimination of Canadian Forces bands during the reductions of the 1990s, coupled with the personnel cap for Operation APOLLO, meant that the battle group had no formal musical support for the operation. An informal "Kandahar Pipes and Drums" was organized by soldiers who had talent and brought their own instruments. Led by Capt Gordon Hagar, four bagpipers were able to provide the required support at KAF.

The Canadian pipers were thrown right into the breach on 20 February 2002, following an incident where an Australian SAS Regiment patrol hit a mine while on an operation. U.S. Air Force Pararescue Jumpers jumped into the minefield to stabilize and recover the wounded, but Trooper Andrew Russell died on the scene. The SAS Regiment second-in-command asked the pipers to play at the ramp ceremony, which was held at 2400 hours while the media were sleeping. When the pipers played "Amazing Grace," however, this woke some of the media, who demanded to be allowed to film the event. This demand was rebuffed by American public affairs staff. "Flowers of the Forest" and "Scotland the Brave" were played as the coffin was placed aboard a C-17 and the honour guard departed.

The Kandahar Pipes and Drums would go on to play other ramp ceremonies, but the most important was undoubtedly the repatriation of the four Canadians killed during the Tarnak Farms bombing. Only those present can appreciate the poignancy of having bagpipes at that event.

Operation GREEN GOPHER: 25-28 February 2002

In late February 2002, 5 Platoon was warned to prepare to assist in an important sensitive site exploitation mission. A 'guest' Canadians referred to as "Dr. Evil" arrived at KAF escorted by a heavily armed team drawn from the CIA, the FBI, and the Port Authority Police Department. "Dr. Evil" was a biologist involved in anthrax research.

There were serious concerns that Al Qaeda was interested in acquiring or developing and then deploying biological and chemical weapons. When Al Qaeda was based in Sudan, bin Laden invested money in Sudanese government research organizations investigating chemical weapons production and use.[70] Al Qaeda also was in contact with the Hussein regime in Iraq sometime in 1994 and discussions were undertaken regarding the transfer of biological warfare and chemical warfare expertise to Al Qaeda.[71] Those relationships bore fruit when Al Qaeda acted as the link between the Taliban regime and the Hussein regime. This link involved the deployment of Iraqi chemical warfare personnel to Afghanistan in 1998.[72]

Right after the 9/11 attacks, letters containing powdered anthrax arrived at the offices of several American news agencies, government officials, and private citizens. Five of the people subsequently died and around 50 others were infected. The assumption that Al Qaeda was subjecting the United States to bio-terrorism was made, and copycat incidents pushed public hysteria (and Cipro production) to new levels.[73] Anthrax was also mailed to a number of government addresses in Kenya.[74] Canada was not immune. On 16 October 2001, Parliament Hill was evacuated when mail handlers developed symptoms that could have been anthrax-related. A cabinet minister then received white powder in the mail. This material was quarantined and flown by a Canadian Forces aircraft to a lab in Winnipeg for analysis. A similar incident at Queen's Park in Toronto in February 2002 resulted in the evacuation of 2 000 people.[75]

CIA analysis of captured Al Qaeda material pointed to a possible former production site somewhere south of KAF.[76] The most likely location was in the Al Qaeda complex at Tarnak Farms, an agricultural area and village seven kilometres south of the airfield that had been commandeered and converted into a terrorist training centre. Those sites had been bombed heavily during the air campaign. The possibility that biological or chemical agents could be present at the site meant that a significant operation had to be established. GREEN GOPHER was the code name assigned to this sensitive site exploitation mission.

GREEN GOPHER was a multinational, inter-agency affair. Given the uncertainty of the research facility's exact location, the CIA decided to fly in "Dr. Evil," who was being questioned about his links to Ayman al-Zawahiri by authorities in Pakistan. He was escorted by a CIA/FBI/Port Authority Police Department team. A technical exploitation unit consisting of chemical and biological warfare specialists had to be brought in to do the actual exploitation. Criminal Investigation Division investigators had to be able to run DNA tests on any bodies encountered. Combat engineers would be needed to disarm any booby traps. Decontamination and medical facilities, established forward in case of casualties, were also needed. Finally, the whole force needed to be escorted to and from Tarnak Farms, and a perimeter had to be set up to protect the entire effort while it was in progress.[77]

5 Platoon's task was to escort the SSE force and to provide security at the site in conjunction with the AMF while the job was in progress, and then to ensure that the enemy did not re-seed the site with new mines and booby-traps the following night. A number of MLVW 2.5-ton trucks from the FSG and some American Humvees from 2nd Battalion 187 Infantry were borrowed to give 5 Platoon mobility.[78]

"Dr. Evil" confirmed that the Tarnak Farms site was the one he had equipped for Al Qaeda over the course of three visits culminating in January 2001. The explosive ordnance disposal team cleared a surface approach to this site. The Technical Escort Unit and the Other Government Agency team found "vials, beakers, new-looking lab equipment and a

new building containing sinks, shelves, and a large amount of countertop space." "Dr. Evil" confirmed that this was some of the equipment he acquired, but this was not the place used to store biological material and that "there were some appliances missing." The team decided to conduct a more complete exploitation on this and the other site the next day.[79]

Trying to establish communications links, 5 Platoon spent a lot of time 'herding cats' in the marshalling area; each packet had to be in place in a specific order. For example, 626th FSB had to establish a separate site with medical and decontamination facilities in case personnel conducting the exploitation were exposed to chemical or biological agents. This meant escorting 6 000 gallons of water and the decontamination team down Highway 4 and then west towards Tarnak Farms prior to deployment of the other elements.[80]

The Technical Escort Unit exploitation of the biological warfare lab involved photographing the entire facility in detail and collecting swab samples. One of the Afghan interpreters told the team that "someone used to haul out black liquids in large vials for the people that used to work here." On completion of the task, the Technical Escort Unit and the Other Government Agency concluded that "this lab was set up in a manner to produce anthrax," but no pathogens could be identified by the swipe tests. The samples had to be sent back to the United States for detailed study.[81]

Led by Lt Cowan, 5 Platoon moved off down Highway 4, escorting a circus array of vehicles – a mini-flail, an armoured bulldozer, an excavator, a dump truck, water trucks, and Humvees loaded with Criminal Investigation Division investigators, scientists, and CIA personnel. The force arrived at Tarnak Farms without incident. The magnitude of the damage made the task unmanageable in the time frame assigned to GREEN GOPHER and the decision was made to withdraw and pick up the lab team on the way back to KAF.[82]

GREEN GOPHER was just one of many similar sensitive site exploitations conducted by coalition forces in Afghanistan in 2001-2002. Such operations rarely had an immediate and tangible pay-off, as the data collected were pieces of a much larger puzzle, in a much larger game. Though the battle group's participation was limited, it did provide participants with an opportunity to see that their efforts were part of a larger war.

Analysis of the sites in Afghanistan led the intelligence community to conclude, in May 2003, that Al Qaeda "and associated extremist groups have a wide variety" of chemical and biological agents available to them. Specifically, "training videos found in Afghanistan show [Al Qaeda] tests of easily produced chemical agents based on cyanide" and "the group has crude procedures for making mustard agent, sarin, and VX [nerve agents]." Al Qaeda "has explored the possibility of using agricultural aircraft for large-area dissemination of biological warfare agents such as anthrax." The group "has openly expressed its desire to produce nuclear weapons. We know that the group could easily construct a radiological dispersal device [which] could result in panic and enormous economic damage."[83]

Operation ANACONDA and Operation HARPOON: March 2002

As the Taliban and Al Qaeda forces retreated south of Kabul in January 2002, interviews with displaced persons suggested that the enemy was preparing a last stand in the Shah-i-Kot region near Gardez. This formidable mountainous area consisted of a high feature dubbed "The Whale" in the west, followed by a valley with the town of Serkhankhel in it to the east. Then there was literally a wall of mountains to the east of the town, with numerous passes leading to the Chumara and Naka valleys, followed by more rough terrain and then Pakistan. The town of Serkhankhel lay in the valley between The Whale and the mountains. Estimates of how many enemy were present varied in the high hundreds – and there was a possibility that leadership targets were hiding there as well. (See Figure 2-4)

Between 13 and 20 February 2002, the American staffs formulated an ambitious plan called Operation ANACONDA. Infiltrating special operations forces would gain access to and take down air defence positions. A surprise air assault would then establish blocking positions in the eastern passes with American infantry companies. U.S. Special Forces and AMF would then enter the Serkhankhel Valley like a piston and push the enemy into the blocking positions, while air power and SOF hunted and destroyed anybody trying to escape.[84]

Fortuitously, the arrival of 3 PPCLI in Kandahar freed up U.S. forces protecting KAF to participate in Operation ANACONDA. As there were specialist deficiencies, an American request went to 3 PPCLI for additional snipers. After some debate with the DCDS staff in Ottawa, this request was granted and five Canadian snipers were assigned to 1st and 2nd Battalions, 187th Infantry for the operation.[85]

Early in the cold morning of 2 March 2002, special operations forces cleared the way for the air assault as the CH-47 Chinooks loaded with troops thumped their way into the blocking positions. Things started to go wrong at nearly every phase of the operation. Helicopters were shot down, there was uncoordinated air support, and casualties started to mount. Within minutes of landing, Canadian snipers MCpl Arron Perry, MCpl Graham Ragsdale, and Cpl Dennis Eason came under direct and indirect fire as they disembarked with their American counterparts. While the landing force went to ground on their landing zone, the three snipers moved to the high ground, remained in the open, and were able to bring effective fire onto the enemy.[86]

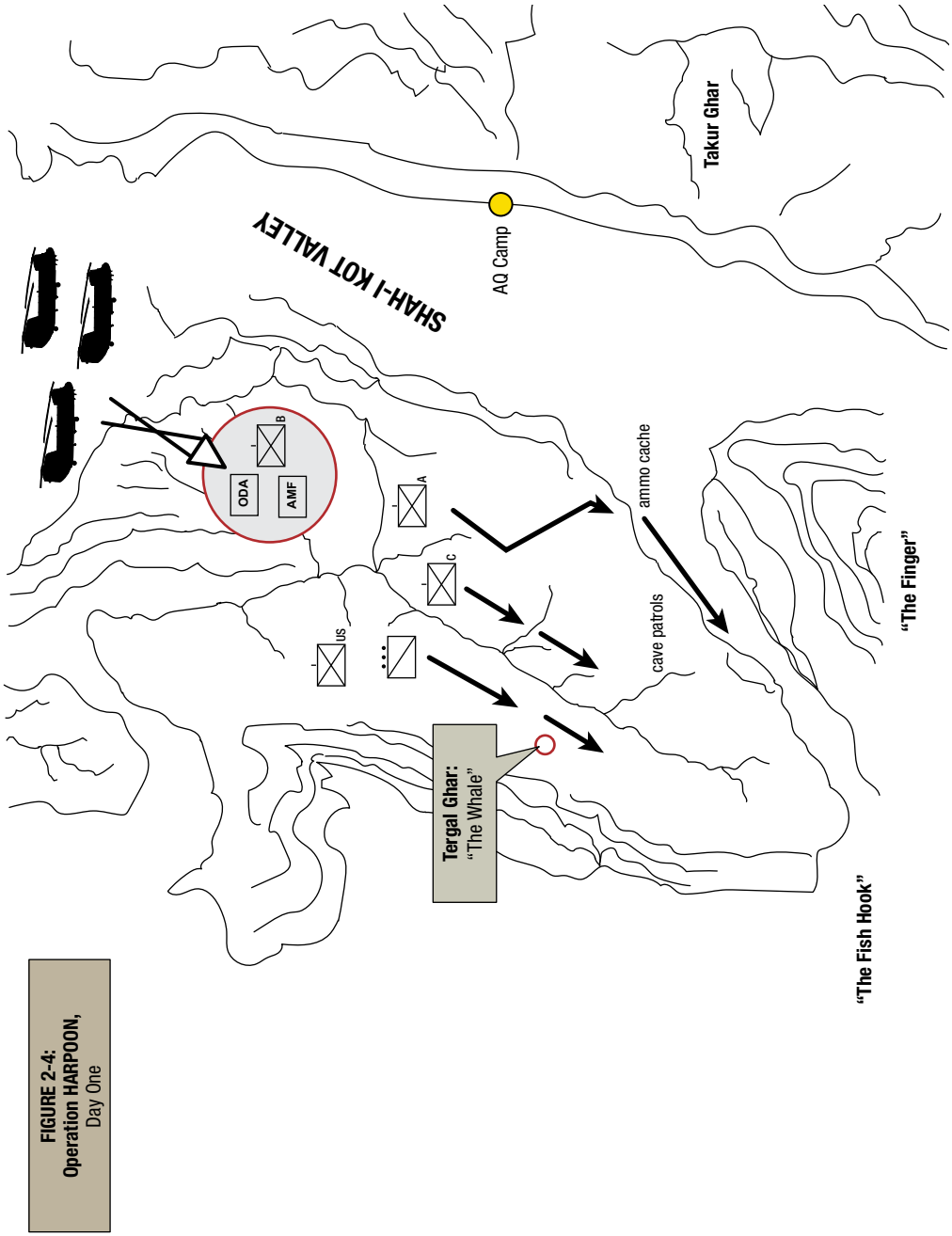

FIGURE 2-4:
Operation HARPOON,
Day One

Figure 2-4: Operation HARPOON, Day One

Photo Credit: DND AP2002-5593

Operation HARPOON turned out to be anticlimactic, but the anticipation and stress during the initial insertion of troops onto the 'Whale' feature was very real. Padres provided services on the ramp at Bagram Air Field prior to the air assault.

The next day MCpl Tim McMeekin and Cpl Robert Furlong, working with 1-187 Infantry, were in a patrol base that came under fire. Relocating, the sniper team engaged a number of enemy insurgents at ranges greater than 1 400 metres. Over the next several days, the Canadian snipers moved around the battlefield, engaging and disrupting the enemy at long range with their McMillan Brothers TAC-50 sniper rifles.[87] Furlong successfully engaged an enemy machine gunner at nearly two and half kilometres, which was at the time a world record shot. This feat resulted in increased 'street cred' and prestige for the Canadian intelligence and liaison staffs working alongside the American brigade headquarters.[88] All five Canadian snipers were recommended for and eventually received the Bronze Star, a prestigious American decoration for acts of heroism, merit, or meritorious service in a combat zone.

When LCol Pat Stogran heard things were going wrong with Operation ANACONDA, he had the 3 PPCLI staff work out contingency plans to move the battle group or parts of it up to Shah-i-Kot. Could the Coyote squadron drive there? Would the toboggan groups with their medical supplies and heaters be useful? What would it take to get the battle group to Bagram? Then, on 5 March, Col Wiercinski called and asked if 3 PPCLI could air assault into the Naka Valley to draw off enemy reinforcements and disrupt further movement to the east towards Pakistan.[89]

That option, however, was vetoed by the Canadian commander in Tampa in what was seen by the Canadian leadership in Afghanistan as a risk-averse decision. Instead, a decision was made to use 3 PPCLI to sweep and clear the Whale feature. An American battalion was to fly in and take up the positions around KAF while 3 PPCLI deployed to Bagram Air Field by C-130 Hercules. The initial plan was to have two battalions air assault onto the Whale feature, but this was later reduced to two PPCLI companies and an American company brought in from Kuwait – A Company from 4-31st Infantry. 3 PPCLI was cut from TF Rakkasan to a brigade they had not worked with before: 2nd Brigade from the 10th Mountain Division. This phase was called Operation HARPOON.[90]

The problem was this: what exactly was 3 PPCLI supposed to do? LCol Stogran could not get anything more specific other than "kill Al Qaeda" from Col Kevin Wilkerson, who commanded 2nd Brigade. After some time, the 3 PPCLI staff was able to get some definition on their mission. There was an estimated 80 to 100 Al Qaeda fighters in the cave complexes on the Whale. 3 PPCLI with attachments would air assault, sweep the Whale feature, and conduct sensitive site exploitation on anything the enemy left behind. The FSG made the necessary preparations to move all three companies, plus the battalion headquarters, to Bagram. Recce Squadron, 12 Field Squadron, and the FSG continued with KAF protection tasks.[91]

On 10 March 2002, 3 PPCLI moved to Bagram, but a lack of CH-47 lift delayed the insertion. There was some uncertainty as to what the Patricia's could expect on The Whale. It was an extremely rugged mountain with a 'spine' that ran northeast to southwest, re-entrants, ravines, and drop-offs; there was broken rock everywhere. It would take time to comb it and ensure that there were no stay-behind enemy forces or equipment caches. Anticipation and expectations were high – this was potentially the first major fight for the Canadian Army since the Korean War 50 years ago. The troops were pumped up as they waited, and American chaplains dispensed absolution and blessed the helicopters.[92]

The flight took a little over an hour. At 0712Z hours on 13 March, the first Chinooks touched down on The Whale, and the Patricias poured off the ramps. The landing zone was on the northeast portion. B Company faced east and north, while A and C Companies moved in parallel along the western face of the mountain. Recce Platoon and the American infantry company proceeded along the 'spine.' In time, some U.S. Special Forces and Afghan militia arrived.[93] (See Figure 2-5)

It was slow going, as each re-entrant had to be cleared. Some troops were carrying in excess of 100 lbs of equipment, and the Whale was at high altitude. Hydration was a problem. So was the American infantry company, who ignored direction, charged forward in expectation of meeting engagements, and then criticized their Canadian counterparts

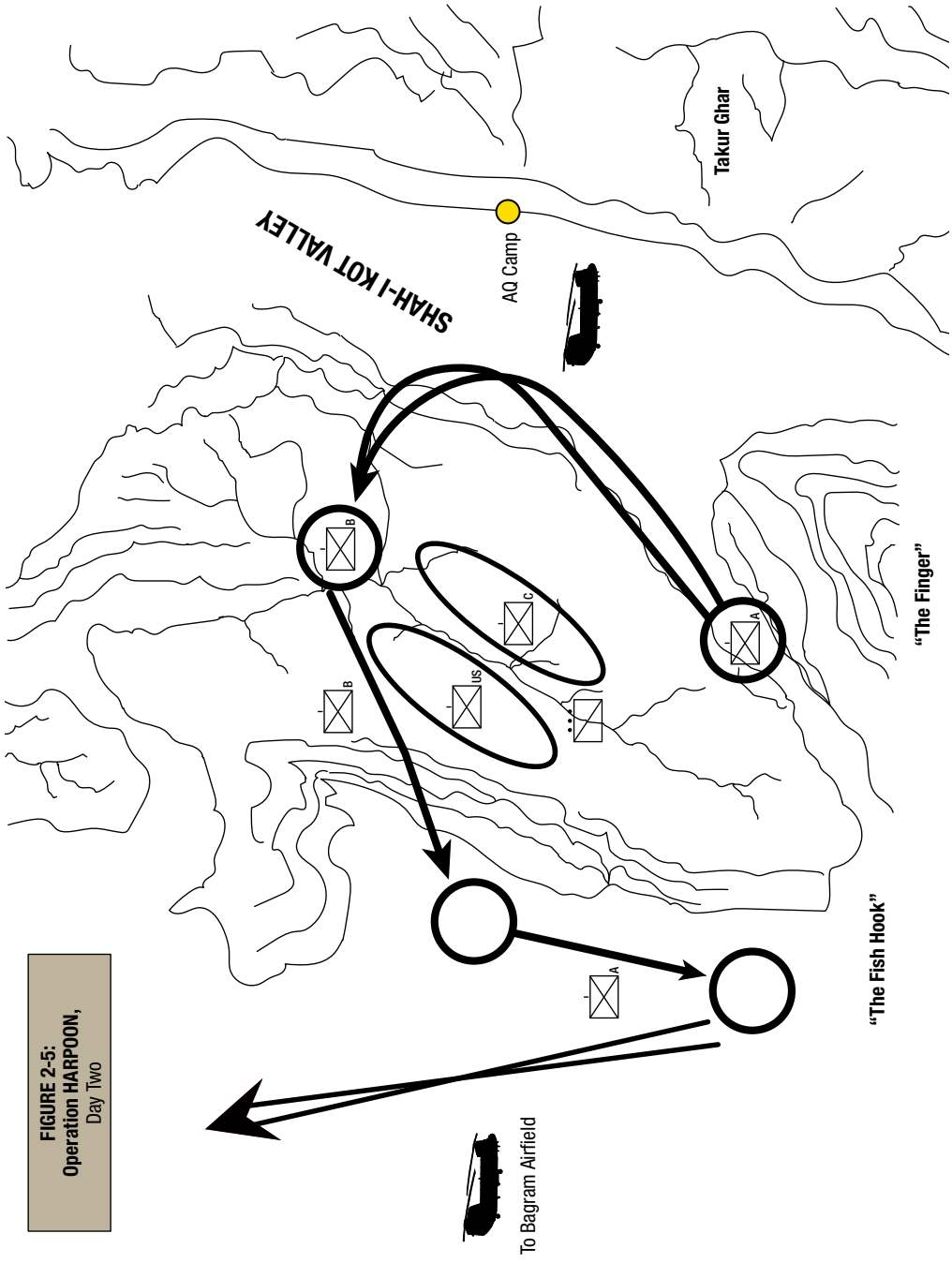

FIGURE 2-5:
Operation HARPOON,
Day Two

Figure 2-5: Operation HARPOON, Day Two

for moving too slowly. The only shooting came from this sub-unit when they engaged two of the enemy, one of whom was already wounded. For the rest of day one, A Company moved down the mountain to check out what turned out to be an ammo cache and then explored a number of caves, while C continued along the southern part of the 'spine.' Some documents, corpses, and discarded equipment were found in various locations.[94]

Photo Credit: DND APD02 5000-152

Operation HARPOON, part of Operation ANACONDA, was conducted at high altitude. Hazards included dehydration, to which some members of the American 10th Mountain Division accompanying the Canadians succumbed.

On day two, A Company was picked up by CH-47, and re-inserted onto the Whale's 'spine'. B Company crossed over to the north face and made its way southwest, picking its way through the broken terrain, searching every outcrop and sangar. After a grueling hike, a small village was sighted at the base of the north face: B and A Companies moved in to check it out but there was no contact. Again, documents and equipment were discovered but no large caches were uncovered. The original Naka Valley contingency plan was dusted off, but ANACONDA was winding down and there was no more need for that manoeuvre. 3 PPCLI and the American company consolidated and then were extracted by helicopter and flown back to Bagram on 18 March.[95]

Despite the lack of contact, later analysis concluded that Operation HARPOON gave impetus to the remaining enemy on the Whale to avoid 3 PPCLI and move south. TF 64, the Australian SAS, lay in wait in hides and called in air support on any enemy they saw trying to move south of the blocking positions or to the east. An estimated 200 enemy personnel were killed by TF 64 in their area of operations.[96]

A follow-on operation, MOUNTAIN LION, was mounted at the end of March 2002 into the Zhawar Kili training camp complex. This involved SOF and TF 1-187 in a sensitive site exploitation mission but the operation was handled from Bagram and did not involve the 3 PPCLI Battle Group.[97]

Blue on Blue: The Tarnak Farms Tragedy

On 17 April 2002, two U.S. Air Force F-16 Falcon fighter-bombers from the 170th Fighter Squadron, callsigns COFFEE 51 and COFFEE 52, took off from Al Jaber Air Base, Kuwait, at 1520Z. Later, they rendezvoused with a tanker aircraft, refueled, and headed for southern Afghanistan. Maj William Umbach and Maj Harry Schmidt's mission was to provide close air support for Operation ENDURING FREEDOM forces as required. Their F-16 aircraft were equipped with LITENING II targeting pods, 20mm cannons and GBU-12 500-lb bombs for that purpose.[98]

Orbiting near KAF after a multi-hour transit, COFFEE 51 and COFFEE 52 saw the flashes of small arms fire south of the base and they decided to attack at 2121Z.[99] Two-and-a-half miles away from the target, the F-16s manoeuvred. The two pilots synchronized their data links so they could look at the target simultaneously. They confirmed that their lasers were synchronized. The GBU-12 hit at 2126Z.

What Umbach and Schmidt saw was in fact Maj Sean Hackett's A Company at the Tarnak Farms range complex conducting a live-fire exercise. A Company was preparing to deploy to Khost on Operation WHITE FOX and refresher training on night firing techniques was required. A Company soldiers were aligned north to south along a drainage ditch firing west across the open terrain, whose only features were a riddled tank target and a circular mud-walled corral.

Grainy imagery from the targeting pod shows the GBU-12 landing amidst a 10-man infantry section, specifically on a cluster of three men – Cpl Ainsworth Dyer, MCpl Curtis Hollister, and Sgt Marc Léger. The bomb landed right next to Léger.[100] The blast killed four Canadians– Dyer, Léger, Pte Richard Green and Pte Nathan Smith – and wounded eight others.

The men of A Company assisted their wounded comrades immediately, believing there had been a weapons malfunction. Three medics dove in and worked on the wounded. One of the medics, Cpl Jean de la Bourdonnaye, worked on a severely injured Sgt Lorne Ford: his actions saved Ford's leg from amputation. A U.S. Army MEDEVAC UH-60 was called in to evacuate

the most seriously wounded, while a Recce Squadron Bison and two Coyote vehicles deployed to recover the other wounded to the hospital at KAF. Severely wounded Canadians were evacuated by US Air Force C-17 to the hospital in Landstuhl, Germany for further treatment.[101]

What had gone wrong? Conducted in an emotionally charged and highly politicized atmosphere, several legal and disciplinary processes converged to depict in some detail a sequence of events that involved flawed institutional procedures and personal shortcomings. Fundamentally, when all was said and done, there were several reasons why Maj Schmidt dropped a GBU-12 on A Company.

First, the Mission Planning Cell at the 170th Fighter Squadron had removed the Tarnak Farms range complex restricted operating zone from the briefing package given to the pilots. A restricted operating zone is established in every area where friendly forces are operating in order to alert pilots of the presence of those forces and ensure they exercise caution. The Board of Inquiry concluded that the 170th's briefing process and its software were deficient in that "the volume of information is often unmanageable and can lead to confusion" and that "all information on the airspace below 10 000 feet above ground level was intentionally removed from the mission data given to the aircrew in order to simplify the information provided in their mass brief and flight maps." Schmidt and Umbach did not know where friendly forces were operating around the airfield. Likewise, the airborne warning and control system crew was operating with a similarly simplified data set that did not depict the restricted operating zone.[102]

Those facts alone were disturbing, but not as disturbing as the discrepancies between what Umbach and Schmidt later said was happening and what the data showed at the time. If there was such a threat to the flight, then why did the pilots not leave the area at speed, re-assess, and then conduct a more deliberate attack? Terms such as "routine," "relaxed" and "casual" were used by the board of inquiry when describing the behaviour of the pilots and their aircraft. That is not the behaviour of men who perceived themselves to be in mortal danger. Defensive systems like chaff or flares were not employed. One observer noted that Schmidt "exacerbated the situation by his manoeuvring and would have forced himself into a self-defence situation…had there been a real threat."[103]

The idea that a multiple-launch rocket system like a BM-21 was a threat to F-16 aircraft was nothing short of absurd. The Board of Inquiry concluded that Schmidt "did not recognize the observed ground fire event as a surface-to-surface training exercise…. This failure of perception was the initiating factor that started the ensuing sequence of missed cues and hasty, imprudent actions that led to the premature release of the weapon. Expectation appears to have played a significant role…."[104] That was the polite way of saying that Maj Schmidt wanted to engage something, anything, that appeared to be shooting at him, regardless of the circumstances.

Two soldiers would be commended for their actions in the wake of the Tarnak Farms tragedy. WO "Billy" Bolen and WO Keith Jones received the Chief of the Defence Staff Commendation for their professionalism and humanitarianism in the period immediately after the misplaced airstrike on A Company.[105]

Put in historical context, the Tarnak Farms incident pales in comparison to the bombing of Canadian front lines in Normandy in August 1944 by American and Canadian air forces – two 'friendly fire' incidents that killed around 250 Canadians and wounded nearly 500.[106] However, the fact that the only Canadian deaths and injuries incurred during the course of 2002 were generated by American forces and not by the enemy, combined with the potential for this incident to activate anti-American sentiment in Canada with subsequent negative effects on public support for the mission, were major factors in how the government and the Canadian Forces responded to the tragedy: with a massive display of public remembrance. The circumstances demanded a response that appeared to be disproportionate. This was, in complete contrast to the way lethal incidents were handled by the Canadian Forces during the United Nations Protection Force period in the 1990s, where ramp ceremonies were not held and public awareness was actively discouraged. Canadian Forces personnel were murdered in ambushes and wounded by snipers, mortared by belligerent forces, and declared casualties of 'accidents.'[107] The response to the Tarnak Farms tragedy eventually heightened expectations vis-à-vis the public profile of repatriation ceremonies and in the investigative approach to Canadian incidents and deaths on the battlefield for years to come.

Operation TORII: Towr Ghar, May 2002

The Towr Ghar ("Black Dust") region of Nangarhar province, part of the Tora Bora mountain range, is easily one of the most forbidding and rugged areas in Afghanistan. Any examination of the eastern part of the country using overhead imagery reveals that Tora Bora immediately stands out as a dark strip, looking like the hull of a sailing ship with the prow at the Khyber Pass and the stern nearly at Kabul. To the north are fertile areas on the plains around Jalalabad; south of the mountains lies the city of Parachinar in Kurram, Pakistan, one of the Federally Administered Tribal Agencies. The FATA constitute Pakistan's 'wild west', where central government control is minimal to non-existent. In December 2001, Towr Ghar became the scene of intense coalition activity. Dubbed 'The Battle of Tora Bora' by the media, ENDURING FREEDOM forces engaged significant Al Qaeda forces in the mountains and, in doing so, came close to capturing or killing Osama bin Laden. (See Figure 2-3)

Information indicated that bin Laden pulled out of Kabul in November 2001 and headed for Jalalabad, where he tried to rally local people to support Al Qaeda. Failing to do so, he and his entourage retreated south into the Tora Bora Mountains sometime in late November or early December. U.S. Special Forces reconnaissance and observation teams were inserted on 5 December north of Towr Ghar, while two anti-Taliban Afghan leaders assembled and deployed their militias in what proved to be an impossible attempt to surround the region. On 14 December, an American JSOC team spotted the entourage, and American aircraft bombed the area over the course of three hours. No more transmissions from the area were made by bin Laden after 14 December.[108]

Coalition and Afghan operations continued until the Towr Ghar region was cleared of Al Qaeda fighters. Some 200 enemy bodies were recovered but exactly how many were entombed in the caves and bunkers or fragmented by the bombing will never be known.[109]

A group of intelligence analysts at Bagram Air Field went back through archived material sometime in March 2002 and re-examined what they thought had happened. They developed a theory that bin Laden had been killed in the Towr Ghar, and they even came up with a likely location.[110] Confirming bin Laden's death held several advantages. First, it would permit resources to be focused on other high value targets. Second, it would prevent, as the analysts put it so succinctly, "chasing Osama bin Laden 'Elvis sightings' for years." Finally, it would demonstrate Operation ENDURING FREEDOM success and provide an information operations victory. Even if the body was not found, the chances that other Al Qaeda information was buried in the area – laptops, communications equipment and papers, for example – would be useful. The downside was that there would be criticism if nothing were found, particularly if the media overhyped the operation.[111]

There were also growing indicators in Jalalabad that the enemy was going to mount a guerrilla warfare campaign or some form of uprising in the province. Going back to Towr Ghar in force would contribute to the deterrent effort along the border, send a message to target audiences in Jalalabad province, and assist with confirmation of bin Laden's demise.[112]

3 PPCLI Battle Group was tasked to lead the sensitive site exploitation mission. The air movements' phase of the operation from KAF to Bagram Air Field built on the template established during Operation HARPOON. Seven C-130s were allocated to move A and C Company, Combat Support Company, Battalion HQ, 12 Field Squadron, materiel and supplies to Bagram, where the battle group was reorganized for the airmobile insertion into Towr Ghar and its targeted objectives.[113]

The first lift took off at 0043 hours on 4 May 2002 in U.S. Army CH-47 Chinooks from the 7-101st Aviation Regiment, escorted by AH-64 Apache attack helicopters from the 3-101st Aviation Regiment. A variety of U.S. Air Force F-16 and A-10 ground attack aircraft were 'stacked' overhead in case they were required. A clutch of Apaches flew ahead

for the formation, closely observing the ground with their sensor systems on the way into the landing zones. The flight from Bagram Air Field was without incident and the helicopters flew through the forbidding black and white peaks of Tora Bora at low level to reduce their vulnerability to ground fire.

At 0130 hours, the first lift was on the ground at Landing Zones EAGLE and LOON. Lift 2 followed at 0430 hours. There was no contact and the only casualty was a knee injury sustained as one of the soldiers disembarked. A Company secured EAGLE and immediately struck out to recce FREZENBERG and SOMME to the west, while C Company secured LOON for lift 2 and conducted a visual assessment of KAPYONG. The mortar teams set up their tubes in their firing positions, while Recce Platoon moved off to establish observation posts on the high ground. The snipers struck out on their own to do the same. In a very short time, the battle group had over-watch on both objectives DIFENSA and CAMINO, again with no contact. All was quiet again once the Chinooks thumped off back to Bagram Air Field. The only sounds were the odd shouted command and the distant engine noise of AH-64 Apaches as they orbited Objective FREDERICK.[114] The Signals section under Capt Eric McFee had to adjust the communications plan quickly since the mountainous terrain interfered with transmissions. Building on the Operation HARPOON experience, all of the sub-units acted as relay nodes throughout the course of the operation. It was not unusual to have an infantry section relay between battle group and company, for example, or have battle group HQ relay between two platoons. Those procedures 'pushed' the radio signals into the nooks and crannies, which usually produced attenuating 'shadow.'[115]

12 Field Squadron's engineers moved onto the KAPYONG underground facility, while the battle group searched in vain for Objective VIMY. Three 40-pound Beehive explosives and a tri-grain were used to blast an eight-foot deep hole in an attempt to find a way in, to no avail. Recce Platoon discovered two clusters of seven bunkers in the A Company area, while A Company searched for a way into FREZENBERG. LCol Stogran reported at the end of the first day that:

> The attacks on the cave entrances sealed them to the point of being indiscernible. Exploitation will focus on the best guess as to exactly where the entrances are and employing demolitions to make an opening. At this point doing an engineer assessment on plant that might be useful would be, at best a [Silly Wild Ass Guess] unless the intention is to carry out a major excavation of the sites….[116]

Photo Credit: DND AP2002-5414

Originally dubbed Operation BLACK DEVIL by 3 PPCLI Battle Group, more politically correct staff elsewhere insisted on a name change. Operation TORII proceeded in May into the Towr Ghar Mountains in a bid to determine whether Osama bin Laden met his fate there – or not, as it turned out.

Contact with local people, however, started to pay off. Several villagers told Canadian troops that Osama bin Laden was not there; he had been extracted by helicopter and taken to Pakistan sometime during or after the battle in December 2001. The most important piece of information from local people, however, was the presence of 24 Al Qaeda graves southeast of KAPYONG, between the nearby villages of Merkhan and Alefkehl, and other reports that a tall, thin Arab man was interred there among them.[117] The bodies came from the valley where KAPYONG was located and were transported from there to the graveyard at Alefkehl for burial. Personnel learned that pilgrims walked to this site all the way from Pakistan to pray. Apparently, they believed that praying at a martyr's grave would cure diseases and ailments.[118]

LCol Stogran tasked Maj Bob Ford to lead the exploitation team. This included 3 Platoon from C Company, a half engineer section from 12 Field Squadron, an intelligence officer, U.S. Army Criminal Investigative Division investigators, and elements from JSOC.[119] Three graves were selected based on the elaborateness of the piled rock coverings and flag array. Afghans place the deceased, wrapped in a shroud, into a hole carved out of the ground three or four feet deep. The hole is usually lined with wood or stones. The hole is protected by a cap of either wood or rock, with a rock pile placed on top of the cap. There are headers and footers for the rock pile, which are typically aligned north-south. *Shahid*, or martyrs' graves, are usually highly decorated with colourful flags.[120] Two sets of exhumations were conducted by the team: three on 5 May, and seventeen on 6 May.

A Canadian observer described the exhumation process:

> The infantry began uncovering the graves ensuring to keep a record of how each grave was marked, as we had to replace each grave exactly as we had found them. Once the markings were removed and recorded we began to excavate the graves. We dug until we hit the top of the cap that covered the bodies. Once all of the dirt was removed an engineer would pull the wood with the rope ensuring the area was clear before doing so. Once the cap was cleared of booby traps it was removed exposing the body. We then checked the body with the mine detector for any abnormal large metal objects. Once satisfied the contacts were zippers, belt buckles and normal things the rope was tied around the ankles of the bodies and the body pulled up from the grave. The CID [personnel] then did their DNA gathering…Once complete we returned the bodies to grave as they were found and the cap replaced and the graves returned to the way we had found them. We performed this on twenty grave sites.[121]

Local people were consulted during the process to ensure that the exhumations were conducted with as much dignity as the situation permitted. The community leaders in Merkhan and Alefkehl understood the nature of the operation and did not protest or oppose it.[122]

The exhumations uncovered 23 "mostly whole" bodies. The faces were unrecognizable because of the mummification process. There were no documents or equipment. Hair samples were taken. It appeared to the team that this was probably Osama bin Laden's close protection party.[123]

Despite repeated demolitions, no trace of the cave entrances could be found. Patrols found nothing to exploit in the objective areas. Local people were able to confirm that the TORII force was working in areas where caves had been located before the bombing and that rock overhangs had been dropped on two of the openings by the December bombing. Maj Rod Keller from 12 Field Squadron recommended that a future mission use seismic exploration equipment to locate the caves first before excavations were attempted.[124]

Consequently, the decision was made to withdraw from Towr Ghar. On 7 May 2002, the first wave of six CH-47s arrived at landing zones LOON, EAGLE, and FALCON to start the extraction at 0300Z. Op TORII ended without incident with the force returning to Bagram Air Field and then back to Kandahar by C-130. Five years later, special operations forces launched into Tora Bora once again, believing that Osama bin Laden may have returned for a last stand, but that operation turned up nothing.[125]

Operation WHITE FOX: Khost, April-May 2002

In April 2002, 3 PPCLI was asked by TF Rakkasan to prepare an infantry company for deployment to the Khost region to protect a former Soviet base that coalition special forces were now operating from. Khost was geographically important in many ways. It lay 50 miles southeast of Kabul and was 20 miles from Pakistan. Khost City and Chapman Air Field sat in what was known as the 'Khost Bowl,' a large, fertile valley surrounded on all sides by wooded mountains. The only highway in was used to connect Khost to the critical garrison city of Gardez, which controlled Highway 1, running from Kabul to Qalat in Zabul province and then to Kandahar City. The Khost Bowl was a natural fortress and a potential sanctuary area. A significant coalition presence in the area was critical in order to deny that sanctuary area to enemy forces, and, in the early days, block Taliban and Al Qaeda forces retreating south from Kabul. (See Figure 2-3)

Chapman Air Field near Khost was generally used as a logistical support and staging base by the coalition for special operations because of its proximity to the mountainous regions along the Durand Line. When B Company arrived, a Special Forces Operatonal Detachment B was in place with a communications detachment from the 112th Signal Battalion. The ODB serviced a number of Operational Detachment Alphas operating in the province, including teams from the 2-19 Special Forces working with AMF and teams from 7th and later 3rd Special Forces who were stabilizing the region. A special forces safe house was situated in Khost city itself to give a local 'foot on the ground' to the teams.[126]

That was the military geography. The social geography was equally important. In the early days of the war, the CIA attempted to form the Eastern Alliance out of tribal elements in the region. The so-called Eastern Alliance was supposed to be a Pashtun equivalent to the Northern Alliance, and substantial resources were deployed to get those elements to either stop being neutral or to switch sides.[127] There was limited success in that endeavour. Pashtuns are not Tajiks, nor are they Uzbeks, and the Northern Alliance had been fighting together for some years. That said, we have already seen with Operations HARPOON and TORII that CIA and U.S. Special Forces had developed relations with the region's Pashtun tribes to varying effect.

The issue in early 2002, then, was who would control what territory and what relationship would exist between those tribal power brokers and the emergent Afghan Interim Administration under Hamid Karzai. The volatility of the governance arrangements in and around Khost had significant ramifications at these higher levels and thus on the stability of post-Taliban Afghanistan. It was this complex milieu that formed the background to the deployment of B Company, 3 PPCLI, in April-May 2002 to Chapman Air Field. In a smaller analogy to the battle group's situation at KAF, it was about guarding an airfield at one level, and it was about local and provincial stability on another. And, as before, the high value target hunt was superimposed on both.

In late January 2002, fighting between armed Pashtun groups was reported in Gardez. In early February, one faction was driven from Gardez with a reported 50 people killed. This prompted a closer examination of the situation by CENTCOM. When the appropriate resources were focused on the problem, details of the complex internecine conflict emerged. Khost had not always been a province and, in the past, had been an administrative division of Paktia province. The Pashtuns in the area did not necessarily go along with those arrangements, though some did when it benefitted them. Hamid Karzai, in his role as leader of the Afghan Interim Administration, designated Pacha Khan Zadran as the governor of Paktia province. Pacha Khan Zadran's brother, Amanullah Khan, was at this time the new Minister for Tribal and Border Areas in the Afghan Interim Administration. Pacha Khan Zadran, whose militias were supported by the CIA and U.S. Special Forces, had his power base in Khost, where his half-brother Kamal Khan Zadran held sway with his own militia forces.[128]

When Pacha Khan Zadran moved to Gardez to take up the governorship, the Gardez Shura led by Haji Saifullah (a man associated with the Rabbani faction in the 1980s) refused to accept him, in part because he was from Paktika and not Paktia province, in part because of revenge issues relating to the civil war in 1992, and also possibly because the Gardez Shura had poor relations with Kamal Khan Zadran in Khost.[129] To complicate matters further, Kamal Khan Zadran did not get along with Zakim Khan Zadran, who also had a militia force stationed in Khost. Indeed, in addition to the power dynamics, there were issues related to land ownership records held in Gardez that related to Khost and who controlled the timber industry in hills surrounding Khost City.[130]

This exceedingly volatile situation was, according to analysts, being stimulated by Jalaluddin Haqqani of the Haqqani Tribal Network, a cross-border Pashtun group allied to Al Qaeda. The analysts believed that "Al Qaeda is deliberately manipulating conflict between Pacha Khan Zadran and the Gardez Shura to weaken the Afghan Interim Administration and discredit the Afghan peace process." It was believed that Al Qaeda had infiltrated both factions and was encouraging them to go at each other.[131] The effects of that dissention may or may not have negatively affected AMF support to Operation ANACONDA.[132]

In addition to the drama over who would be governor in Gardez, infighting between Kamal Khan and Zakim Khan in Khost and the attempted assassination of the Khost security chief ramped up tensions in the city.[133] Those problems deflected special operations forces resources to the point where OEF had to admit that tribal infighting was interfering with the hunt for Al Qaeda leadership targets: Ayman Al-Zawahiri was believed to be hiding in the Khost province in the surrounding mountains along the border.[134] Indeed, on 19 March 2002, enemy forces conducted a significant raid on Chapman Air Field, which was barely held back by the special forces logisticians and signalers based there.[135]

The situation was bad enough to warrant the deployment of a squadron of British special operations forces and two U.S. Special Forces ODBs and their associated ODAs at the end of March to Chapman Air Field.[136]

Tensions remained high throughout April 2002.[137] Several incidents involving rockets or mortars occurred, while reports came in that command-detonated mines were being laid on the roads and that Al Qaeda was recruiting in refugee camps in Pakistan to mount operations against the airfield.[138]

Meanwhile, back in Kandahar, Maj Mike Blackburn's B Company had just relinquished its range time to Maj Sean Hackett's A Company as A Company had been tapped for the Khost deployment. After the Tarnak Farms tragedy, B Company was given the task, while A Company recovered and the remainder of the battle group prepared for Operation TORII.[139]

The mission as assigned by TF Rakkasan was "to secure a FOB for SOF/OGA forces to enable SOF/OGA operations" in the areas of operations surrounding Khost. There was no detail as to how B Company was to accomplish this, which caused issues later. Company D from 1-187 Infantry would essentially climb on board the helicopters that brought in B Company. The 3 PPCLI staff fleshed it out as much as possible: B Company was to "approach the defensive task in a dynamic and aggressive manner (irregular defence routine, covert surveillance, limited perimeter patrols, etc.) thus keeping potential enemy unhinged and deterred."[140]

B Company was cut down for Operation WHITE FOX because of the limited availability of helicopter lift due to ongoing operations. There were two platoons, a forward operation officer, a medic, and an engineer section from 12 Field Squadron. Maj Blackburn was assigned an American communications specialist so that interoperability could be maintained. In addition, B Company, working with 3-101 Military Police Company, became proficient with the M-19 automatic grenade launcher system and other American weapons like the AT-4. Canadian soldiers discovered that there were many, many extra American systems lying around KAF in crates. When asked if the Canadians could borrow them, the TF Rakkasan quartermaster's unhesitating response was, "Sure. How much ammo do you want?"[141]

The insertion onto Chapman Air Field was conducted by CH-47 transports escorted by AH-64 attack helicopters on 20 April 2002. When B Company ran off the back ramps, they could see a ramshackle sandbagged control 'tower' with the sign "Chapman Air Field, elevation 3775 feet" on its plywood side. In the distance, on the other side of the 9 000-foot runway, lay the carcasses of 10 or so tan and green-painted Antonov 32 planes. The main road ran west to Khost city, which was about 3 kilometres away. A wadi ran parallel to the runway, about two kilometres away to the south. A mountain range formed the backdrop, again to the south.[142]

On arrival, B Company discovered that Chapman Air Field housed not only the Special Forces Operational Detachment B, but also an Other Government Agency detachment and signals intelligence collection assets. In addition to being a logistics support facility, the base was an intelligence collector as well.[143] The initial transport issues were solved by the U.S. Special Forces ODB, which was able to secure a number of Toyota Hilux pickup trucks for B Company's use. There were also two AMF organizations at Chapman Air Field, led by different AMF commanders. The Canadians dubbed them 'The Polypro Brigade' because of the underwear given to them by the U.S. Special Forces, and the 'Tank and Artillery Brigade.' The Tank and Artillery Brigade had 12 people living in a shack who manned a handful of rusting T-55s, a 152mm gun, a 122mm gun, and what looked like a 100mm anti-tank gun. There were some 'police' on the road outside the airfield, but it was not clear who they belonged to, as they were not wearing police uniforms.[144]

The immediate problem for Maj Blackburn and B Company was this: where exactly did 'security' for Chapman Air Field begin? At the wire? On the runway? At the tower? The orders were vague. There were no coordinating instructions to govern B Company's relationship to what amounted to several types of special operations forces, intelligence agencies, and Afghan militias that were linked to a complex political environment. The Americans had coordinating problems themselves between what they called 'Big Army' and the special forces world. The right hand usually did not know what the left hand was doing. Where did the Chapman Air Field force's area of operations stop and the U.S. Special Forces area of operations start? That was not clear.[145]

That state of affairs did not prevent B Company from seizing the initiative and applying some semblance of order to a confusing situation. The first move was to assess the defensive measure that already existed. B Company now had to liaise with three separate Afghan militia groups, with no interpreter! It was not clear what factions they belonged to. Consequently, engaging the Afghan militias was a force protection exercise at that level. From time to time, rockets were fired at Chapman, which prompted collective action from the Canadians, Afghans, and Americans to hunt and deter the rocketeers.[146]

Then there was the matter of coordinating firepower to defend the airfield from external assault. The last thing anybody needed was a rag-tag tank crew randomly loosing off 100mm rounds. B Company had brought 60mm mortars, machine guns and M-19 grenade launchers with them. Working with the Tank and Artillery Brigade, they were able to formulate a target matrix so that any direct fire or indirect fire threat to the airfield could be engaged using a combination of Canadian, American, and Afghan systems. Maj Blackburn immediately initiated a nighttime illumination programme to generate a psychological effect on any potential enemy. The Afghan militias were enthusiastic and on occasion, they surprised the Canadians with their creative use of worn-out ex-Soviet equipment.[147]

Over the course of the next two months, B Company maintained the security of this vital facility, not only from the Taliban and Al Qaeda but also from the tribal instability that was growing in Khost. Aggressive patrolling, reorganization of existing defensive stores and resources, and coordinating between the array of forces stationed at the site were the primary tasks undertaken, to great effect. When B Company, as good Canadian soldiers will, started to push the security bubble out more and more, they were yanked back by higher Canadian headquarters and told to stay at the field itself until an American infantry company rotating in would relieve them. Like the KAF security task, Operation WHITE FOX facilitated crucial operations that were conducted in a vital but volatile province.[148]

Contingency Plan PYTHON

In the aftermath of Operation ANACONDA, Operation TORII, and the series of border operations around Khost in March 2002, it appeared as though there were no more large concentrations of Al Qaeda and Taliban forces in eastern and southern Afghanistan. More attention was placed on hunting down the leaders of the deposed Taliban regime in an effort to pre-empt their publicly stated plans to mount an insurgency against the coalition and the emergent interim administration.[149] The primary targets included Mullah Omar, Mullah Baradar, and Mullah Osmani, but there were other 'persons of interest,' including Mullah Rafiq, the Taliban leader who directed the ethnic cleansing campaign against the Hazaras back in the late 1990s.[150]

The task of tracking and apprehending or killing those leaders in southern Afghanistan belonged to the intelligence and special operations apparatus based at KAF. As better information came in while coalition forces expanded operations in the region, the number of special reconnaissance and direct action missions associated with hunting Taliban leadership significantly increased by April 2002.

On 17 March, a direct action mission into Mullah Omar's hometown of Sangsar in Zharey district west of Kandahar City netted thirty Taliban, but no Mullah Omar. These prisoners were processed at facilities in KAF.[151] Another direct action mission on 24 March made a play for Osmani, but with no success.[152] More 'pieces' of the Taliban 'puzzle' were gained either through exploitation missions or from intelligence sources that reported after each raid, and that in turn assisted in continuing operations. On 20 April, a SOF team attempted to get Taliban leader Mullah Bismillah at a house in the northern part of the city. Bismillah was organizing a Taliban 'stay behind' cell. The team killed one Taliban operative and seized weapons, communications equipment, and documents. Bismillah was not home.[153]

How exactly did this affect the 3 PPCLI Battle Group? The possibility that these direct action and sensitive site exploitation missions might run into trouble was very real. The best portrayal of a failed direct action mission is *Black Hawk Down*. This 2001 film depicts the myriad of problems encountered by a special operations task force while hunting leaders in Somalia during the 1993 humanitarian intervention. The most important takeaway from that operation for any professional observer was the need for a responsive, properly equipped conventional QRF that could rescue the direct action force if it encountered forces or situations it was not equipped to deal with. The increase in operational tempo for special operations forces working out of KAF prompted a closer examination of what role 3 PPCLI Battle Group might play in the event that special operations forces requested support in a situation similar to that encountered in Somalia.

Kandahar City was under a certain level of control by the Sherzai family and its associated Barakzai AMF. However, those forces could not indefinitely keep order in a city of a half a million people. It would take some time to establish a government with its associated services. Until that was done, the Sherzai AMF and its assistants from the 19th SFGA occupied a number of key sites inside the city from which they sortied when required. A loose network of checkpoints existed but without any serious command and control. Not all city districts were anti-Taliban. If the enemy leaders or facilitators were ensconced in a pro-Taliban neighbourhood, a situation like that encountered by JSOC in Mogadishu could occur.[154]

It was also possible that a Taliban force might attack some of the coalition-controlled sites in the city. These pieces of key terrain included the governor's guesthouse where Gul Agha Sherzai presided from, the central police station, the governor's palace, and the UN or other aid agencies that were starting to arrive. Special operations forces also controlled Mullah Omar's former residence, now FOB Ghecko, located on the northwest side of the city. A QRF from KAF might have to conduct a rescue operation if any of the sites were threatened or besieged by enemy forces, demonstrations, or other violence.

The Brigade QRF 'package' was based on the forces required to conduct an airmobile extraction using CH-47s. But what if the helicopters were busy elsewhere or the weather deteriorated? Contingency Plan PYTHON was developed by the 3 PPCLI staff to create a ground option that had six Coyotes, three Bisons carrying an infantry platoon, and a Nyala engineer vehicle prepared to extract special forces personnel from the city as required.[155]

The 3 PPCLI Battle Group was prepared to deploy the Contingency Plan PYTHON QRF on a number of occasions. On 9 May 2002, a SOF raid inside the city detained 13 insurgents with weapons and seized a number of laptops.[156] Another direct action on 21 May within the city netted two more detainees and more information.[157] That in turn led to another direct action, which apprehended a commander named Sardar Mohammad

on 6 June.[158] A substantial raid mounted by 19th Special Forces and their associated Afghan militia targeted three houses on 9 June and produced even more data for the intelligence system at KAF.[159] There was no significant local reaction during the course of any of these operations, and PYTHON did not have to be activated.

Outside the city, forces from TF K-Bar mounted operations in Maywand district. Around 20 May, New Zealand and Canadian SOF raided a series of compounds and detained a significant number of people. Not all of these detainees were Taliban insurgents, which annoyed local people who in turn conducted a demonstration at the front gates of KAF. This was the first time that coalition forces saw a symbiotic relationship between operations in the field and backlash by the population. Again, this was a potential threat to KAF operations and had to be taken seriously by the protection forces, though it was suspected that local power brokers instigated the demonstration for their own political and/or economic agendas.[160] LCol Stogran and his staff took note of this phenomenon, which eventually served the battle group in good stead later.

Operation FULL THROTTLE

In May 2002, a special forces operations team based in the upper Helmand valley received information that there was Taliban activity in the remote Deh Rawod area of western Oruzgan province. Deh Rawod was known to be Mullah Omar's childhood home and it was possible that he might seek sanctuary there. Indicators that Mullah Omar, Mullah Osmani, and Mullah Baradar were all in the region entered the intelligence system. In time, Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) resources confirmed that there was unusual communications traffic in the same area. If accurate, it would be possible to mount an operation in order to completely decapitate the remaining Taliban command structure.[161] (See Figure 2-6)

Special reconnaissance by Norwegian, German, Australian, and Canadian teams helped get a better sense of what was going on in the valley. There was a significant amount of activity, far too much for a remote area. One team heard mortars being test fired. ISTAR reportage all pointed to an area just northeast of the town itself that appeared to be a command node.[162]

A subsequent operation in June 2002 involved a mix of Norwegian SOF (NORSOF) and a 12-man ODA from 3rd Special Forces Group. The concept was to insert the special reconnaissance teams from NORSOF, and then use the ODA and Afghans to "shake the tree." The NORSOF team was compromised and all hell broke loose as the enemy engaged them. The collectors heard heavy traffic coming from sites around Deh Rawod. Tactical SIGINT uncovered a network of observation posts, also located on the high ground.[163]

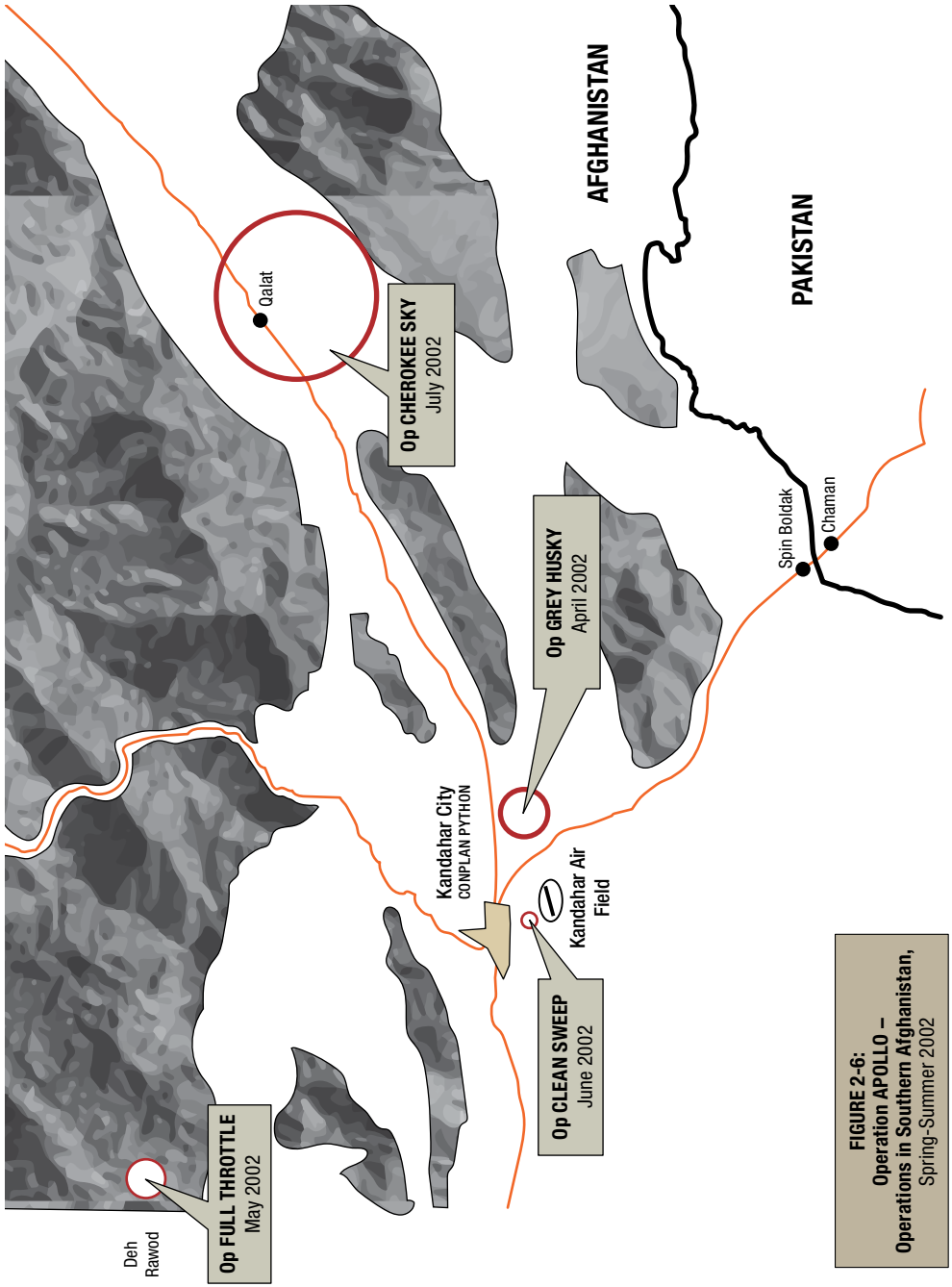

FIGURE 2-6:
Operation APOLLO –
Operations in Southern Afghanistan,
Spring-Summer 2002

Figure 2-6: Operation APOLLO – Operations in Southern Afghanistan, Spring-Summer 2002

Deh Rawod was hot. There were ongoing indications that high-level Taliban leadership was still in the area. Consequently, the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force Afghanistan (CJSOTF-A) commander and staff formulated a plan to go into the Deh Rawod valley and find them. At some point in the planning process, a requirement for a light infantry battalion emerged and 3 PPCLI became involved. This operation was code-named FULL THROTTLE.

The FULL THROTTLE organization was code-named TF TYCZ. Three AMF company-sized units accompanied by two U.S. Special Forces ODAs plus psychological operations teams and civil affairs teams were one element; 3 PPCLI with its three companies was the second. CH-47s accompanied by AH-64s would insert them. The third element consisted of two platoons of U.S. Navy SEALS flown in by 160th SOAR's MH-47D, MH-60 and MH-53 helicopters. AC-130 Spectre gunships would cover the operation from the air.[164]

The main problem was determining exactly what compounds the enemy leadership occupied in the valley. The population was hostile and the introduction of a substantial force by ground would result in the activation of the enemy early warning system, which in turn would give the leaders time to escape or hide. The CJSOTF-A commander planned a deception operation with two special forces ODAs in an adjacent valley and Canadian and New Zealand SOF in other areas to draw enemy attention away. Once the intelligence picture improved, forces would conduct cordon and search operations.[165]

Elements from three ODAs with SIGINT collectors plus a SEAL team would conduct special reconnaissance from the high ground around the valley. In the next phase, 3 PPCLI's three infantry companies would fly into blocking positions. ODAs with Afghan forces would pass through and initiate cordon and search operations. Another SEAL team would fly in and raid a number of compounds. 3 PPCLI's other tasks involved taking on any concentration of Taliban forces from the outside and preventing anyone from trying to get out of the search area.[166]

Operation FULL THROTTLE was a significant and large operation, on par with ANACONDA or TORII. LCol Stogran, however, was not happy with the plan as, in his view, the intelligence was not exact enough. Consequently, 3 PPCLI removed itself from the planning process.

FULL THROTTLE, however, went forward. The air assault portion of the plan was shut down, for whatever reason. The plan was now for U.S. Special Forces ODAs and their Afghans forces to drive from Kandahar all the way to Deh Rawod. There would be no blocking force inserted by helicopter. After 3 PPCLI pulled out, planners tried to get a battalion of Royal Marines but were unable to obtain British concurrence. The final size of the force was whittled down to two ODAs, a SEAL platoon and a company-sized group of Afghans mentored by men from 19th SFGA.[167]

As the force drove into the Deh Rawod valley, the early warning system alerted the enemy. The special reconnaissance teams then called in air support to suppress the machine gun and anti-aircraft artillery sites. AC-130s and JDAMS dropped from B-52s were used. One of these anti-aircraft guns was located in a compound adjacent to another compound hosting a wedding party. This gun engaged coalition forces and an AC-130 Spectre responded with its 25mm and 40mm guns. Unfortunately, the Spectre attacked the party compound, killing an estimated 40 people and wounding between 50 and 100. The elements from 19th SFGA noticed, on insertion, that they were about to attack the wrong compound and stopped just in time. Operation FULL THROTTLE was halted immediately.[168]

The investigation into Operation FULL THROTTLE concluded that "the operators of those weapons elected to place them in civilian communities and elected to fire them at coalition forces at a time when they knew there were a significant number of civilians present."[169]

That did not assuage an antagonized population, however, in Kandahar City. Reports from the city indicated that the educated people were "sad" at the tragedy, but that the uneducated portions of the population were "angry" and thus subject to manipulation. The situation did not improve on 6 June when the new Afghan vice-president was assassinated.[170]

3 PPCLI's intelligence section assessment determined that coalition forces were "wearing out their welcome" and that another negative incident may well cause the public to turn against the coalition in masse."[171] That environment could produce problems for camp security or it might result in incidents where Contingency Plan PYTHON might have to be activated in the city. Fortunately, that did not occur during the rest of 3 PPCLI's stay in Afghanistan.

Operation CHEROKEE SKY: Zabul, July 2002

By June 2002, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM planners started to look at Zabul province. This key geographical area not only sat astride Highway 1 from Kabul to Kandahar, but its capital Qalat was a large city close in proximity to a mountainous area adjacent to the Pakistan border. The Shinkay valleys were perfect for infiltration and provided cache areas, while Qalat could serve as a conduit for enemy forces still operating in Oruzgan province next door. A U.S. Special Forces ODA had been located in Qalat for some time but was pulled out. There were indicators that weapons were being moved and that Taliban and Al Qaeda factions were training in the hills for guerrilla warfare. And there were reports that Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Mullah Omar and a number of Arabs had been seen. The governor's support for the coalition effort was suspect.

Operation CHEROKEE SKY was designed to do two things: shake up Zabul to see what fell out of the tree; and help set the conditions for improved connections between the Afghan Interim Administration and Zabul provincial administration. Recce Platoon from 3 PPCLI using Hilux vehicles and desert clothing to reduce their profile would work with an ODA, callsign PYTHON, in order to develop information on the province's infrastructure and potential enemy target areas. Then, 3 PPCLI and American forces would conduct an air and ground manoeuvre onto selected targets, with 3 PPCLI handling the area north of Qalat and other forces working Shinkay and Qalat itself. There were supposed to be three interlocking operations throughout Zabul, but the only one to receive enough resources was CHEROKEE SKY, which now used a reduced number of forces but expanded to handle two of the three target areas.

Recce Platoon departed on 22 June 2002 to link up with the special forces in Qalat, while the Coyotes were pulled off the line and prepared for the operation. Recce Platoon promptly ran out of spare tires on the way, and an aerial resupply was arranged. Link up was achieved, the recce went ahead, and the platoon returned on 25 June with more information on the suspected training sites and cave hides north of the city. They were re-inserted on 30 June.

On Canada Day, B and C Companies air assaulted in U.S. Army CH-47 Chinooks onto the designated search areas where there were known caves but unknown contents. Maj Tom Bradley's Recce Squadron and echelon concurrently drove up Highway 1 to Qalat from Kandahar. B and C Companies came back with nothing in their cave searches. Recce Squadron and the Battalion HQ then moved to the governor's palace in Qalat to confer with him and his supporters, while the FSG and Admin Company arranged for aerial resupply of the forces using American helicopters. A quantity of 20 SA-7 surface-to-air missiles was turned over to special forces by the AMF working for the governor. After discussions with the governor, LCol Stogran decided to focus on the Shinkay Valley. The two infantry companies would air assault onto the high ground, while a combined Recce Squadron/Special Forces/AMF force would move by ground through the valley and conduct search operations. This is essentially what happened on 3-4 July. B and C Companies flew into blocking positions, while the ground force came in from the west. When there was no contact, a number of platoons were dispatched to a cluster of villages in a smaller valley south of Shinkay. Again, no contact. Local people (and most likely the enemy forces observing the affair) were amazed at the presence of the Coyotes in such an inhospitable environment – when one broke down, the crew were virtually swarmed by curious civilians. A pair of AH-64 Apaches flew in at low level and the crowd dispersed.

B and C Companies were extracted by helicopter on 4 July 2002, while Recce Squadron, Special Forces, and the AMF worked their way out of the mountainous region and back to Highway 1, returning to KAF late in the day.

Most participants in CHEROKEE SKY were unaware of the higher-level aspects of the operation. 2 (EW) Squadron and other allied and associated resources were focused on the region, waiting to collect on radio traffic capabilities displayed by any potential belligerents, specifically any early warning networks that presented themselves. Collection efforts started in earnest the minute Recce Squadron departed Kandahar and entered Zabul province. That effort continued throughout CHEROKEE SKY and was, arguably, the most successful part of the operation. It also contributed to OEF's understanding of the provincial dynamics necessary to establishing a coalition presence in Zabul, and then a Provincial Reconstruction Team in 2003. CHEROKEE SKY also demonstrated that Operation ENDURING FREEDOM forces had freedom of movement even in mountainous areas close to the Pakistan border and could exercise that freedom of movement. The issue then – as now – was how to conduct deception operations to fool the enemy's agents and early warning networks so that the mission could be accomplished. In effect, Operation CHEROKEE SKY was the prototype of what would become a staple of later Canadian operations in Afghanistan – 'manoeuvre to collect.'

Conclusion

In the weeks after the Tarnak Farms incident, soldiers from A Company, a number of Assault Pioneers and a member of 12 Field Squadron designed a memorial cairn to commemorate the fallen. Such cairns have become a tradition for deployed Canadian units over the past 40 years – one stands on the Golan Heights between Israel and Syria, and another is situated at Ledra Palace Hotel in Cyprus. A portable version was located in Primosten, Croatia, and another in Bihac, Bosnia. In the Afghanistan case, the design evolved into an Inuksuk, an Inuit hunting and navigation aid from Canada's north. By the end of the tour, the monument was completed and included inscribed granite tiles with the unit's symbols of the lost personnel.

The Inuksuk still stands in 2011 at KAF. It has been displaced twice: from the international terminal to the Taliban's Last Stand terminal, and then from there to The Boardwalk, where it continues to remind passersby of the early days of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and what it cost in Canadian, American, and Australian lives.

The Canadian Army's contribution to Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in 2002 was important on many levels. First, it was a clear expression of Canada's commitment to the international fight against the Al Qaeda organization in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. By stripping away the Taliban shield and assisting with sensitive site exploitation missions, the collective understanding about what Al Qaeda was up to – or, just as importantly in some quarters, not up to – was revealed to the coalition. That, in turn, facilitated other operations elsewhere around the world to counter other terrorist acts.

Second, Operation APOLLO's ground component and its operations went far beyond a symbolic commitment – though there were those in Ottawa who wanted a symbolic commitment, who wanted Canadian troops tucked safely away somewhere to keep domestic political risk levels low. The operating environment, national pride, and professionalism, however, demanded a real contribution that had to have a significant impact on the mission in Afghanistan. Securing base areas like KAF and Chapman Air Field, providing QRF for special operations extraction, augmenting the ISTAR collection apparatus and, most importantly, providing critically needed coordinating functions between coalition forces in the pursuit of all of those tasks significantly contributed to the success of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in 2002. Canada did not get in on the 'big fight' in the Shah-i-Kot Valley and, no doubt, there are some who regret it. However, the lack of participation in some of those actions should not be allowed to overshadow the other important Canadian Army contributions. Without those contributions, operations in the region would have been much more difficult and potentially more costly in manpower.

In the end, the ground operations in Kandahar in 2002 were an unintended but important precursor to Canada's extensive re-commitment to southern Afghanistan in 2005. No one thought Canada would come back to Kandahar. Certainly no one thought the Canadian Army would come back in force and help protect the city from escalating insurgent activity. But that was several years in the future. The Canadian Army would go back to Afghanistan, but this time to Kabul under a different command.

Photo Credit: Author

The Canadian battle group designed and constructed an Inuksuk-based monument to commemorate deceased coalition troops, including the four Canadians mistakenly bombed by the U.S. Air Force.

ENDNOTES

1. The NCCIS Light Det was later augmented with a Heavy Det and kept in theatre as a deployable link to Bagram Air Field.
2. Interview with LCol Pat Stogran (Kingston, 9 December 2002).
3. RAKKASAN is Japanese for 'falling umbrella,' that is, a parachute.
4. Stogran interview.
5. Address by VAdm Greg Maddison to the CANSOF conference held at RMC (8 December 2010).
6. Stogran interview.
7. Interview with Major David Short, U.S. Army, Combat Studies Institute, Leavenworth, Kansas (4 January 2006); "Statement of Lieutenant General Emil R. Bedard, Deputy Commandant of the Marine Corps for Plans, Policies, and Operations, United States Marine Corps Before the House Armed Services Committee Special Oversight Panel on Terrorism, June 28, 2002."
8. Sean M. Maloney, *Enduring the Freedom: A Rogue Historian in Afghanistan* (Washington DC: Potomac Books, 2005).
9. Ibid. See also Naylor, *Not a Good Day to Die*.
10. HQ Marines Corps Intelligence Department, "SIGINT Marines Help Fight War on Terrorism in Afghanistan," *Intelligence Community Newsletter*, Vol. 1 Issue 2, p. 2.
11. "History of the 626th BSB," Fort Campbell U.S. Army Website.
12. Author's field observations on the American medical system at KAF, March 2003.
13. As described in Chris Mackey and Greg Miller's *The Interrogators: Inside the Secret War against Al Qaeda* (New York: Little Brown and Co, 2004). This section is derived from the author's analysis of over 700 JTF GTMO detainee assessment reports that are available at http://wikileaks.org/gitmo. These reports are invaluable for a number of reasons: first, they depict what the detainee told the interrogators, specifically where they were recruited and trained. Second, there is analysis by the staff situating what they were told, which is not always accurate or true, with summarized intelligence assessments and comparative analysis done between the interrogators to establish where the detainee fit within the larger jihadist enterprise. It is possible to reconstruct the broad outlines and even some detail on the bulk of the jihadist training network in Afghanistan from these records.
14. Ibid., p. 345. See also Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm,* pp. 240-242.
15. Mackey and Miller, *The Interrogators,* p. 348.
16. CIA memorandum for Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Report on the Rendition, Detention, and Interrogation Program (27 June 2013).
17. Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm,* pp. 240-242.
18. Ibid., p. 146.
19. 3 VP INTSUM (18-19 May 2002).
20. See Rolf Mowatt-Larssen, "Al Qaeda Weapons of Mass Destruction Threat: Hype or Reality?" Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs (January 2010). Note that Mowatt-Larssen was the head of intelligence for the U.S. Department of Energy and a former member of the CIA.
21. As discussed in Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al Qaeda Strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

22. Don Rassler and Vahid Brown, *The Haqqani Nexus and the Evolution of al-Qa'ida* (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2011).

23. WikiLeaks, JTF-GTMO, "Recommendation to Retain under DoD Control: Mohammad Anwar" (21 February 2004).

24. WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Detainee Assessment: Abdullah R. Razaq" (6 August 2007).

25. WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Detainee Assessment: Abdullah Mohammad Khan" (27 March 2008); WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Detainee Assessment: Abdullah Hussein" (23 April 2008).

26. Roland Jacquard, *In the Name of Osama Bin Laden: Global Terrorism and the Bin Laden Brotherhood* (Durham: Duke University Press 2002), p. 48;"Return of the Arabs: Al Qaida`s Current Military Role in the Afghan Insurgency," Combating Terrorism Center, USMA;; Vol 1 Issue 3, Article 8, Combating Terrorism Center, USMA ; and "Afghan Camps Linked to Recent Terror, " Jihad Watch, (24 November 2003).

27. See Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 134; Roy Gutman, *How We Missed the Story* (Washington DC: U.S. Institute for Peace, 2008), p. 209; Maria A. Ressa, *Seeds of Terror* (New York: The Free Press, 2003), p. 169; Peter Blaber, *The Mission, the Men, and Me* (New York: The Penguin Group, 2008), pp. 99-100; and also the Rassler and Brown Report.

28. This is the author's conclusion based on his unpublished study, "Jihadist Training Facilities in Afghanistan."

29. Blaber, *The Mission, the Men, and Me*, p. 99; WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Recommendation for Transfer: Mohammad Aman" (22 October 2004); WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Recommendation for Transfer: Faris Musil al-Ansari" (14 April 2006); WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Recommendation for Continued Detention: Khalid Mohammad Al" (22 May 2007).

30. WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Detainee Assessment: Min Gazrov" (14 March 2008).

31. See Mowatt-Larssen, "Al Qaeda Weapons of Mass Destruction Threat: Hype or Reality?".

32. IDA terrorism study, *The Anatomy of Terrorism and Political Violence in South Asia*, see Karzai paper II-58.

33. Jacquard *In the Name of Osama Bin Laden,* p. 51.

34. WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Recommendation to Retain in Custody: Khalid Sulymanjaydh al Hbyashi" (31 January 2004).

35. Confidential interview with Canadian intelligence personnel. See also Evan F. Kohlmann, *Al-Qaeda's Jihad in Europe: The Afghan-Bosnian Network* (Oxford: Berg Press, 2004); WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Detainee Assessment: Bensayah Belkacem" (28 April 2008); WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Detainee Assessment: Sabir Lahmar Manfud" (17 April 2008); WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Detainee Assessment: Mustafa Air Idr" (30 June 2008); WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO to COMUSSOUTHCOM, "Response to the DCO decision to Transfer Detainee Al Zuhhayri, Ahmad Zayd Salim" (29 December 2008).

36. WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Detainee Assessment: Mutij Sadiz Ahmad Sayab" (9 January 2007); WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Recommendation for Transfer: Nabil Hadjarab" (22 January 2007); WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Detainee Assessment: Bendar al-Ataybi" (25 February 2007).

37. Jacquard, *In the Name of…*, pp. 50-51; "U.S. DoD briefing from 1998 imagery "Kowst, Afghanistan Terrorist Camps"; Rassler and Brown Report; Gutman, *How We Missed the Story*, p. 83.

38. Jean-Charles Brisard, *Zarqawi: The New Face of Al-Qaeda* (New York: Other Press, 2005), p. 66, 72, 76-77.

39. WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Detainee Assessment: Khair Ulla Said Wali" (6 March 2008).

40. WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Detainee Assessment, Abdullah Alamatrafi" (25 October 2007); WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Recommendation for Continued Detention Under DoD Control: Hamud Dakhil Hamud" (25 August 2006); WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Recommendation for Continued Detention Under DoD Control: Abdulhadi Abdallah Ibrahim al-Sharakh" (26 July 2007).

41. Richard Miniter, *Mastermind: The Many Faces of the 9/11 Architect, Khalid Shaikh Mohammad* (New York: Sentinel Books, 2011), Ch 3.

42. This data is derived from WikiLeaks, JTF-GTMO detainee reports at http://wikileaks.org/gitmo. See JTF GTMO, "Detainee Assessments for Hasan Zamiri" (18 November 2008) and "Detainee Assessments for Ismaiil Saiid Ali Bin Nast" (21 August 2008).

43. Blaber, *The Mission, the Men, and Me*, pp. 67-68. See also WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Detainee Assessment: Abdulatif Nasser" (22 November 2008) and JTF GTMO, "Recommendation for Continued Detention: Faha Sultan" (21 April 2007).

44. WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Transfer Recommendation Mohammad Omar" (31 May 2003); JTF GTMO, "Recommendation for continued detention: Fahd Umr Abd al-Majid al-Sharif" (1 September 2006); see also Razaq assessment.

45. Memorandum to House Government Reform Committee, Congressional Research Service, "Terrorist Attacks by Al Qaeda" (31 March 2004).

46. WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Update Recommendation for Transfer to the Control of another Country: Abdulhadi Abdallah Ibrahim al-Sharakh" (26 July 2007).

47. WikiLeaks, JTF GTMO, "Detainee Assessment, Mustafa So Bin Ahmad" (25 July 2005); JTF GTMO, "Detainee Assessment, Saifullah A. Paracha" (1 December 2008); JTF GTMO, "Detainee Assessment, Mohammed Ahmad Rabbani" (26 May 2008).

48. See Mowatt-Larssen, "Al Qaeda Weapons of Mass Destruction Threat: Hype or Reality?".

49. Ibid.

50. The author received this information in December 2005 from an NGO liaison representative with the Kutchie tribes living in the Reg Desert, and from an Afghan security specialist originally from Spin Boldak.

51. Richard Miniter, *Mastermind: The Many Faces of the 9/11 Architect, Khalid Shaikh Mohommad* (New York: Sentinel Books, 2011), pp. 171-177.

52. Miniter, *Mastermind*, pp. 232-234. See also CIA memorandum for Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Report on the Rendition, Detention, and Interrogation Program, 27 June 2013.

53. CIA memorandum for Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Report on the Rendition, Detention, and Interrogation Program, 27 June 2013.

54. 3 PPCLI OPSUM (20 February 2002).

55. Interview with LCol Tom Bradley, (Edmonton, 26 June 2008).

56. Ibid.

57. 2 (EW) briefing to the author. The Director of the National Security Agency commended the personnel from 2 (EW) Squadron and CFIOG for their work in southern Afghanistan.

58. Telephone interview with Major Rod Keller (13 November 2008).

59. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (6 February 2002).

60. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (27 February 2002).

61. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (13 March 2002).

62. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (7 April 2002); CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (12 April 2002); CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (15 April 2002).

63. Telephone interview with LCol Colin Blair (28 October 2008); telephone interview with Major Marjorie Coakwell (10 November 2008); Telephone interview with Captain Gordon Hagar (14 November 2008). See also FSG War Diaries, DHH.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

70. Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror,* p. 128.

71. Scheuer, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes,* p. 124.

72. Ibid., p. 188.

73. The American attacks were later determined in 2008 to be the handiwork of a deranged U.S. Army BW scientist.

74. Message to DL, 4A0013 file 3350-165/A27 v.3, "Kenya Anthrax Confirmed" (18 October 2001); "Possible Anthrax Letter Received by UN Offices in Nairobi."

75. CBC news, "Parliament Hill areas evacuated after anthrax scare" (16 October 2001) and "Anthrax Hoaxes Strike Canadian Government Offices; Evacuation Ordered." These incidents were later determined to be hoaxes.

76. Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm,* p. 278.

77. 3 PPCLI Op 002 GREEN GOPHER, "Operation GREEN GOPHER OPORD" (n/d).

78. 3 PPCLI Op 002 GREEN GOPHER, 5 Pl Comd to Devil TOC, "Operation GREEN GOPHER: 25-27 February 2002 After Action Review" (27 February 2002).

79. 3 PPCLI Op 002 GREEN GOPHER, "Tarnak Farms SSE" (26 February 2002).

80. 3 PPCLI Op 002 GREEN GOPHER, "Operation GREEN GOPHER OPORD" (n/d).

81. 3 PPCLI Op 002 GREEN GOPHER, Memorandum for the record, "Subject: GREEN GOPHER 27 February 2002 (Sensitive Site Exploitation)" (27 February 2002).

82. Ibid.

83. CIA Directorate of Intelligence, "Terrorist CBRN: Materials and Effects," CIA Library (May 2003).

84. As described in Les Grau's *Operation ANACONDA: America's First Major Battle in Afghanistan* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011).

85. Interview with LCol Pat Stogran (Kingston, 9 December 2002); and Interview with Major Brian Hynes (Ottawa, 17 July 2008).

86. Memorandum Commander TF RAKKASAN to Commander, CJTF MOUNTAIN, "Narrative pertaining to the recommendation for award of the Bronze Star Medal for MCpl Graham Ragsdale, Canadian Army."

87. Memorandum Commander TF RAKKASAN to Commander, CJTF MOUNTAIN, "Narrative pertaining to the recommendation for award of the Bronze Star Medal for MCpl Robert Furlong, Canadian Army."

88. This translated into increased access to planning and intelligence aspects of OEF for Canada. See interview with Major Brian Hynes (Ottawa, 17 July 2008).

89. Interview with LCol Pat Stogran (Kingston, 9 December 2002).
90. Stogran interview.
91. Ibid. See also 3 PPCLI "Mission Synopsis-Op HARPOON 13-18 March 2002."
92. Stogran interview.
93. 3 PPCLI "Mission Synopsis-Op HARPOON 13-18 March 2002."
94. As described in Les Grau's *Operation ANACONDA: America's First Major Battle in Afghanistan* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011).
95. Interview with LCol Sean Hackett (Kingston, October 2008).
96. Ibid.
97. Briefing, 1-187 IN, "Operation MOUNTAIN LION: Lessons Learned."
98. This section is in general based on information from "Tarnak Farm Board of Inquiry: Final Report" (19 June 2002). Michael Friscolanti's *Friendly Fire: The Untold Story of the US Bombing that Killed Four Canadian Soldiers in Afghanistan* (Toronto: John Wiley and Sons, 2005) presents an exhaustively detailed and more human depiction of the events at Tarnak Farms and the various inquiries and trials that followed. See also interview with LCol Sean Hackett (Kingston, October 2008).
99. These edited transcripts are drawn from "Tarnak Farm Board of Inquiry: Final Report" (19 June 2002).
100. See the photo section in Michael Friscolanti's *Friendly Fire: The Untold Story of the US Bombing that Killed Four Canadian Soldiers in Afghanistan* (Toronto: John Wiley and Sons, 2005).
101. "Tarnak Farm Board of Inquiry: Final Report" (19 June 2002).
102. Ibid.
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid.
105. CANFORGEN 043/03 CDS 032 281524z March 2003 Honours and Awards Announcement.
106. C.P. Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War Volume III: The Victory Campaign* (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer, 1960), pp. 223, 243. The numbers are approximate but sufficient for comparative purposes.
107. Scott Taylor and Brian Nolan, *Tested Mettle: Canada's Peacekeepers at War* (Ottawa: Esprit de Corps Books, 1998), Ch. 11.
108. Dalton Fury, the pen name of U.S. Special Forces officer Major Thomas Greer, has produced the only military account so far detailing the Tora Bora operation. What is clear is that there was debate between the various American component commanders and between them and the CIA as to the importance of the region and the status of the so-called 'Eastern Alliance,' and given that other operations in support of the Northern Alliance were a priority, the Tora Bora operation started as a minimally-supported reconnaissance in force. What remain unclear are the details of this debate, plus the IPB and shaping aspects of the operation prior to the insertion of the coalition force. See *Kill Bin Laden: A Delta Force Commander's Account of the Hunt for the World's Most Wanted Man* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2008).
109. Ibid.
110. 3 PPCLI PowerPoint presentation, "UBL is Dead, and We Can Recover His Body" (30 March 2002).
111. Ibid.
112. 3 PPCLI "FRAGO 1 to OPORD BLACK DEVIL" (n/d).

113. Telephone interview with Major Colin Blair (31 October 2008).

114. 3 PPCLI SITREP OP TORII, DHH War Diaries Section, Box 1323 folder 8710 file 6 (4 May 2002).

115. Interview with Major Eric McFee (Kingston, 12 November 2008).

116. 3 PPCLI SITREP OP TORII (4 May 2002).

117. 3 PPCLI SITREP by Capt P.E.D. Nicholson, 3 PPCLI Intelligence Officer; interview with LCol Pat Stogran (Kingston, 9 December 2002).

118. 3 PPCLI "INTSUM of Al Qaeda Grave Exploitation 5-6 May 2002."

119. 3 PPCLI Engineer Op BLACK DEVIL Report, Patrol Report by MCpl R.B. Hryniuk (11 May 2002); Fury, *Kill Bin Laden,* p. 282.

120. 3 PPCLI "INTSUM of Al Qaeda Grave Exploitation 5-6 May 2002."

121. 3 PPCLI Engineer Op BLACK DEVIL Report, Patrol Report (11 May 2002).

122. 3 PPCLI SITREP OP TORII (5 May 2002).

123. 3 PPCLI "INTSUM of Al Qaeda Grave Exploitation 5-6 May 2002."

124. 3 PPCLI SITREP OP TORII (6 May 2002).

125. Mark Owen, *No Easy Day* (New York: Dutton Press, 2012), pp. 149-151.

126. See the front page of *The Progress News* Emlenton, Pennsylvania (8 July 2003) that shows the flag used by the various special forces units at Chapman Air Field being presented to the Emlenton Volunteer Fire Department; Brad Mills, "112th Signal Battalion soldiers get valor awards," *Army Communicator* (Spring 2003).

127. Gary Berntsen, *Jawbreaker,* pp. 240, 272, 275, 290.

128. "Afghan warlords battle for control of Paktia province," *The News International* (31 January 2002); Hamid Hussein, "Afghanistan-not so great games," *Defence Journal* (April 2002).

129. "Fighting in E. Afghanistan Claims More than 50 Lives," *Voice of America* (6 February 2002).

130. Scott Baldauf, "Al Qaeda Hunt: Violent Shell Game," *Christian Science Monitor* (20 May 2002); Hafizullah Ghashtalai, "Friction Over Land Rights in South," *Afghanistan Recovery Report No. 113* (1 April 2004); Hamid Hussein, "Afghanistan-not so great games," *Defence Journal* (April 2002).

131. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (27 February 2002).

132. Naylor, *Not a Good Day to Die*, pp. 71, 157.

133. "Gunman Attack Afghan Security Chief," Associated Press (25 March 2002).

134. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (25 March 2002).

135. Brad Mills, "112th Signal Battalion soldiers get valor awards," *Army Communicator* (Spring 2003).

136. Julian West, "Final Phase of Afghan Campaign is most deadly," *The Telegraph* (31 March 2002).

137. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (16 April 2002); CJTFSWA ASSESSREP, (S) SSS 10 G 3 3350-20 v. 3 (17 April 2002).

138. DHH War Diaries Section, Box 1781 folder 9795, "Operation WHITE FOX" (17 April 2002).

139. Interview with Major Mike Blackburn (Petawawa, 17 June 2008).

140. Berntsen, *Jawbreaker.*

141. Blackburn interview.

142. Ibid.
143. Ibid.
144. Ibid.
145. Berntsen, *Jawbreaker.*
146. Blackburn interview.
147. Ibid.
148. Ibid.
149. See JTFA-SWA ASSESSREPS for this period and see also Anonymous, *Hunting Al Qaeda*.
150. Anonymous, *Hunting Al Qaeda,* Ch. 1.
151. Human Rights Watch, "Enduring Freedom: Abuses by US Forces in Afghanistan" (2005).
152. JTFSWA HQ, Osborne memorandum (n/d).
153. 3 PPCLI INTSUM 72 (21-22 April 2002).
154. Author's observations in Kandahar City in 2003. The 19th SFGA was replaced with the 20th SFGA by that time.
155. 3 PPCLI War Diary, Commander's Entry (1-31 March 2002). DHH War Diaries Section, 3 PPCLI War Diary, Narrative (1-2 April 2002).
156. 3 PPCLI INTSUM 91 (10-11 May 2002).
157. 3 PPCLI INTSUM 102 (21-22 May 2002).
158. 3 PPCLI INTSUM 118 (6-7 June 2002).
159. 3 PPCLI INTSUM 121 (9-10 June 2002).
160. 3 PPCLI INTSUM 107 (26-27 May 2002).
161. Anonymous, *Hunting Al Qaeda,* pp. 85-86.
162. 3 PPCLI, Operation FULL THROTTLE CONOP (25 June 2002).
163. Ibid; Anonymous, *Hunting Al Qaeda,* Ch. 7.
164. Ibid.
165. Ibid.
166. Ibid.
167. Anonymous, *Hunting Al Qaeda*, Ch. 9.
168. Ibid.; CENTCOM release 2002-09-03 "Investigation of Civilian Casualties, Uruzgan province, Operation FULL THROTTLE 30 June 2002" (6 September 2002).
169. Ibid.
170. 3 PPCLI INTSUM 147 (5-6 July 2002).
171. 3 PPCLI INTSUM 146 (4-5 July 2002).

OPERATION ATHENA:

THE CANADIAN ARMY COMMITS TO THE INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE FORCE IN KABUL, 2002-2003

The last Canadian soldiers from the 3 PPCLI battle group left Kandahar for rest and recovery in Guam, but they were not the last Canadians to leave in 2002. Canadian special operations forces working as part of TF K-Bar and its successor organization continued until November 2002, as a Romanian infantry battalion replaced 3 PPCLI in the KAF security role and a brigade from the 82nd Airborne Division arrived to relieve TF Rakkasan. During the course of those months, a variety of events, many of them unforeseen and unplanned, laid the groundwork for the return of Canadian Army forces to Afghanistan in mid-2003 and formed the base of an unanticipated long-term commitment to that country.

Before we get into the specifics of Canadian Army operations in Kabul, it is crucial to understand exactly why Canada chose to commit forces to ISAF. First, there is a great deal of confusion on the part of the general public about these matters, particularly given that the decision was taken in the face of another possible commitment to the war in Iraq. Second, that decision ultimately affected the decision by Canada to commit forces in 2005 to Kandahar province. It is also extremely important to understand what Canadian leaders wanted to accomplish in Kabul. As subsequent chapters will reveal, the Canadian Army played a significant and even dramatic role in stabilizing the emergent Afghan state – and even staved off another destructive civil war.

What About Phase IV Operations?

The Afghanistan campaign in 2002 progressed more rapidly than anticipated, and by the summer CENTCOM had decided to cut back on American forces deployed there. There were various reasons for this, most of them related to planned operations against possible Al Qaeda lodgments in Yemen and Somalia, and the planned war against Iraq. It was clear that American planners at CENTCOM were looking at Iraq in late 2001 and that they were seriously concerned that the Hussein regime might eventually provide the Al Qaeda organization with scientific expertise or actual material for weapons of mass destruction. Despite the rhetoric and criticism that followed the 2003 invasion and subsequent insurgency in Iraq, the possibility of technology transfer was a real concern in 2001 and it was one driver in Iraq planning. It ultimately had a spillover effect on Canadian planning related to Afghanistan.

In February 2002, however, Canadian representatives in Tampa were getting better indications as to where CENTCOM wanted to head with Phase IV operations in Afghanistan. Phase IV was designed to "prevent the re-emergence of terrorism" in Afghanistan, specifically Al Qaeda. The end-state established for Phase IV was to include[1]

a. an Afghan government capable, unilaterally or with coalition support, of preventing the re-emergence of terrorism;

b. a coalition that maintains the military capability to detect, deter, or defeat any re-emergence of terrorism in Afghanistan;

c. the establishment of an Afghan National Army; and

d. a security cooperation structure.

Key tasks to be undertaken to achieve this state included establishment of a "Follow-On Security Assistance Force" (or FOSAF) and organizations to handle "Security Cooperation," and some means of linking them to the emergent Afghan government.

The British-led ISAF was planning to train the Afghan National Army, but was under-resourced, unenthusiastic and had limited vision – the British only wanted to train a battalion for Kabul and a nucleus Afghan training force. Discussions between interim administration chairman Hamid Karzai and U.S. President George Bush resulted in CENTCOM and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM taking a more active and larger role in Afghan National Army planning and training, with the more limited United Kingdom/ISAF planning pushed to the margins. Germany retained its control over Afghan police training, as it had committed to doing under the Bonn Agreement.[2]

However, someone was going to have to assist with stabilizing the country once the United States moved on; increased recognition of this fact in Donald Rumsfeld's Pentagon drove the need for a follow-on security force. This included increased American interest within the Afghan Interim Administration in expanding ISAF throughout the country to urban centres, before the potential expiration of ISAF's UN mandate. The Afghan Interim Administration was even pushing for German command of ISAF. The United Kingdom wanted to jettison its command of ISAF in Kabul as soon as possible for a number of reasons, but no one wanted to take on command of the force. Germany and Turkey were looking at that task, but Turkey's role in ISAF command became entangled in Iraq war planning politics.[3] The future of ISAF looked problematic – was it possible that Operation ENDURING FREEDOM would take over its mandate? That was a major question in early 2002.

Karzai wanted ISAF and its possible FOSAF successor to "be expanded from Kabul to all major urban centres" but "the political will and capability of the UN or coalition nations to meet this request is unclear."[4]

CENTCOM planners also noted that some form of "Weapons Control Program" was necessary to deny weapons to any potential insurgency and to secure weapons for the emergent Afghan National Army. "Weapons must be decreased if the Phase IV objective to prevent the re-emergence of terrorist organizations is to be achieved; this would hopefully be accomplished without creating a power vacuum of military imbalance in any region." Prophetically, Canadian representatives noted that

> These plans, when implemented, will form the basis of transition of the Afghanistan operation from one of direct combat to one of nation building. CENTCOM's position has been that the responsibility for nation building rests with the Afghan government however, as the mechanics of implementing these plans become known it is evident that if the overall OEF campaign mission in Afghanistan is to be achieved then CENTCOM will have to take more of a lead as well as a support role in nation building.[5]

At the end of March 2002, Canadian planners in Tampa and in Ottawa started to examine how to sustain a Canadian presence in Afghanistan if they were required to do so. The assumption was that Canadian strategic objectives would remain the same, that is:

a. eliminate Al Qaeda as a continuing terrorist threat;

b. take appropriate military action to compel the Taliban to cease all support, harbouring and cooperation with Al Qaeda;

c. isolate the Taliban regime from all international support;

d. bring Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda leaders to justice;

e. address the immediate humanitarian needs of Afghans; and

f. assist in the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

The second and third points were considered completed with all others ongoing. The Americans believed they would be in Afghanistan for two years. "There have been discussions on an expanded International Security Assistance Force under a new UN mandate which would operate outside of Kabul," the planners noted, "however, this is unlikely and there are indications that the current ISAF mandate will be extended six months." The American planners were looking at "ways to unify command within the [Area of Operation] under HQ CJTF Afghanistan," that is, put ISAF under Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, but "how ISAF would fit into the command and control arrangements remains somewhat uncertain." Similarly, nobody was sure how the Bonn-mandated German-led police training organization and the planned American-led Afghan National Army training organization would relate to either Operation ENDURING FREEDOM or ISAF. There were just too many unanswered questions in March 2002.[6]

In May and June 2002, the United Nations Security Council accepted a proposal to extend the ISAF mandate by another six months. At the same time, Turkey took over command of ISAF from the British while the Afghan Interim Administration became the Afghan Transitional Administration (ATA). The U.S. Secretary of Defense's office announced that the United States would support expansion of ISAF outside of Kabul sometime in the future. ISAF command succession planning became a problem as Turkey indicated that it would take the role for one term. The Afghan Transitional Administration, in the form of Hamid Karzai, approached the Germans for help and the Germans and Dutch started to look at taking over from the Turks. Both countries then approached NATO for assistance in staff planning and intelligence enablers. NATO agreed to assist ISAF. That did not mean that ISAF was NATO-commanded yet, just that NATO was assisting the Dutch/German headquarters with the mission. NATO debated taking over ISAF well into November 2002.[7]

Iraq, Afghanistan – or Both?

The Canadian policy-making community was, by the fall of 2002, at a crossroads. It was evident that the United States was going to go to war against the Hussein regime in Iraq sooner rather than later. Canada had been involved in nearly every military action to contain Iraq since 1990 and was already committed to several supporting operations.[8] Going into Iraq with the Americans would be consistent with existing long-term Canadian policy but only if there was a UN resolution authorizing the mission, which was still under dramatic debate well into the fall. It is important to understand that the Canadian government's opposition to war in Iraq came very late in the game and was not extant in 2002.

Canada pulled the Operation APOLLO battle group out of Afghanistan in July after its six-month commitment, but kept the special operations forces committed until November 2002. The Minister of National Defence requested a study of Afghanistan and

Iraq options to be conducted by 30 August 2002. The Privy Council Office, Foreign Affairs, and the Department of National Defence were to coordinate in creating these options. The objectives of the study, as agreed upon by these three organizations, were to[9]

1. consider a military option, although Canada favours a peaceful resolution and would rather see Iraq accept the return of UN inspectors;

2. provide the Minister of National Defence with background information;

3. maintain Operation APOLLO completely separate from operations versus Iraq; and

4. determine what forces Canada could assign to Iraq.

Planners noted that six CF-18s could be committed to Iraq, but only for a single six-month deployment, while a light infantry battalion could be ready by the summer of 2003. The Chief of the Land Staff had an additional battalion contingency force that could be committed to Afghanistan if necessary, though that would mean pulling out of Operation PALLADIUM, Canada's Stabilization Force commitment in Bosnia.[10]

The full briefing to the Minister of National Defence, given in October 2002, concluded that "[the] original [OEF] objective of eliminating all terrorist organizations is not achievable – [this has] changed to defeating terrorist organizations with global reach." That meant Al Qaeda, and, in the assessment of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM commanders in Afghanistan, "decisive combat operations in Afghanistan may have reached the point of diminishing returns" in that fight and the "possible expansion of ISAF [is] seen as a short term solution to expanding the Afghan Transitional Administration sphere of influence over regional warlords."[11] No one was able to identify what the long-term solutions were.

Canadian planners also noted that an "inner coalition" was emerging in CENTCOM circles: those nations committed to Iraq, as opposed to those committed to Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, which were not committed to Iraq. If Canada wanted to continue to have access to and influence in this process, a high-value Canadian contribution would have to be made in Iraq: a battle group, special operations forces, CF-18s, or some other commitment elsewhere. Canada, the planners believed, had several options. First, Canada could "backfill" in Afghanistan. Second, Canada could commit to combat operations in Iraq. Third, Canada could "fence-sit" and maintain the status quo with the Operation APOLLO naval forces, which remained in the Indian Ocean but were of lesser value now that the Horn of Africa had decreased in importance as a possible Al Qaeda sanctuary zone. Fourth was the "secondment" option: send Canadian exchange officers to serve in Iraq with allied forces.[12]

Canadian planners generated six "backfilling" options for Afghanistan using Canadian forces:

1. ISAF lead and an ISAF battle group by June 2003;
2. command of ISAF KMNB and an ISAF battle group;
3. an ISAF battle group;
4. training support to the Afghan National Army;
5. a battle group to Operation ENDURING FREEDOM forces in Afghanistan; and
6. officers to be sent to work with UNAMA.

It was evident that there were concerns about Canada not playing a significant role in Iraq and the potential fallout from that choice in coalition circles. The planners believed, however, that the United States and the United Kingdom would welcome a Canadian commitment to ISAF. But ISAF's mission was changing; the situation in Kabul was increasingly fragile and there was the potential "for the [ISAF] mandate to expand beyond Kabul." The Germans and Dutch were already inquiring at the Warsaw NATO ministerial meeting about having NATO take over ISAF.[13]

At that meeting, options involving taking ISAF lead and an ISAF/KMNB battle group option were not considered viable by Canada, though the commitment of a battle group to ISAF or one to Operation ENDURING FREEDOM were considered viable. Training the Afghan National Army was deemed to have a "slim chance of success" with regards to having any saliency in a "backfill" argument. Committing forces to fight in Iraq was considered viable.[14]

The possibility of a Canadian commitment to Iraq remained open well into 2003. When the Minister of National Defence was briefed in early January 2003, he was told that a CF-18 force, a Disaster Assistance Response Team, and a Nuclear Biological Chemical company commitment were all off the table as they were not viable options. At that point, the viable options included the Operation APOLLO naval forces re-roled to support Iraq operations; a special operations forces squadron; a special operations forces squadron plus a light infantry company to support them; a mechanized infantry battle group (ready to go by the end of April 2003); or a light infantry battle group (ready to go by early April 2003).[15]

Employment of Canadian forces in Phase I, II, and III operations (combat) in the Iraq effort was deemed a superior commitment to a Phase IV (stabilization) role. Why? Phase IIII operations would "provide Canada with significant leverage [regarding] enhanced international relations." Commitment of Canadian SOF, particularly Tier I SOF, was the exception in that it could be used to hunt high-value leadership targets in Phase IV and therefore had some saliency.[16]

In a subsequent discussion, DCDS planners confirmed that the Americans viewed Afghanistan as a secondary United States effort; Afghanistan was now believed to be in Phase IV (stabilization) and was rapidly becoming an economy of force mission. There were security challenges and the future role of ISAF was uncertain, but the planned Provincial Reconstruction Teams, a concept being tested by the Americans in Afghanistan, were a possible means of extending Afghan government control over the countryside. A PRT commitment, analysis suggested, was not a viable option for Canada at this time because they were embryonic in structure and it was not clear where they would be located. In addition, the DCDS noted, "it is strongly recommended that Canada not consider ISAF lead" as a backfilling option, though the reasons were left unstated.[17]

Internally, the ISAF lead option was problematic. Taking lead nation status meant that Canada would have to provide the higher-level command and control architecture for the international force. That meant planning and logistics staff, signals systems, and intelligence processing capacity. These things were usually associated with Corps-level headquarters or even Division-level headquarters. Canada had neither, having disbanded 1st Canadian Division Headquarters in the 1990s to save money and relieve the pressure of critics who thought Canada had too many generals. The Army did have several brigade headquarters, so taking KMNB was considered to be more within Canadian capabilities at that time.[18]

Committing to Kabul

On 14 February 2003, however, ambassador David Wright informed the NATO Secretary General that Canada would contribute a battalion and a brigade headquarters to ISAF in the summer of 2003 and that Canada favoured expansion of the ISAF mandate outside of Kabul. How and why did this happen?[19] The Chrétien government had not, at that time, ruled out a Canadian military commitment to Iraq – or, if it had, it was not communicated to DND or the Canadian Forces. Indeed, it looked in retrospect as if Canada was planning to commit forces to both conflicts simultaneously, or at the very least keep both options open. This is, of course, what planners do. At no time was there any suggestion that the planning staff was operating independently of national control. The Minister of National Defence knew what was going on, was 'leaning forward' and understood that the Prime Minister needed viable options no matter what decision was made about sending Canadian forces to either Iraq or Afghanistan.[20]

Just when the situation could not get more confusing, a request came in from CENTCOM for Canada to explore taking a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan. Lt Gen Michael DeLong, USMC, from CENTCOM, communicating with the DCDS, noted, "your early active response was a key to our success in Afghanistan and led to the swift defeat of Al Qaeda and the removal of the Taliban from power." It was increasingly critical, the note explained, that the Afghan Interim Administration be able to expand its authority outside of Kabul. Three PRTs were to be established first, and more later. The role of the PRT was, as DeLong explained, to provide advice to local leaders; aid in the development of local and regional bodies to mitigate instabilities; facilitate information operations and non-governmental organizations operations; and monitor development.[21] That request was put on the back burner for two months while the planners sorted out the NATO/ISAF connection.

Canada's strategy in the NATO arena was to get Germany, the Netherlands, Italy or Spain to accept command of the higher ISAF headquarters, while Canada handled the Kabul Multinational Brigade and contributed one of the battle groups. This was in part done because Canada lacked certain 'enablers' that are usually associated with higher command: medium-lift helicopters, close air support, strategic communications, and theatre-level intelligence capacities. In this sense, Canada was paying for its lack of investment in such capabilities after the Cold War was over and when peacekeeping and stabilization were in vogue.

Italy, it turned out, was interested in leading ISAF in the future, but not in 2003. The French were unsupportive; strategically, they objected to NATO 'out of area' operations (and had done so historically,) and they expressed concerns that NATO would be seen as an occupying force in Afghanistan and did not want to be dragged in. Their expeditionary forces were also heavily engaged in neo-colonial enterprises in Africa.[22]

At the end of February, MGen Cam Ross was dispatched to solicit NATO partners for an expanded ISAF. On the same day, the warning order for Operation ATHENA was issued: the Canadian Army was to be prepared to deploy forces to Kabul, Afghanistan, as part of a NATO-led ISAF mission.

MGen Ross's journey was, however, disappointing. Spain was considering lead status, but was not sold on the PRTs or the need for ISAF expansion throughout Afghanistan. Italy would support NATO ISAF but did not want to over-commit because of its commitments in Kosovo. The Germans strongly supported NATO ISAF because they saw a need to give the mission long-term strategic direction that they believed it lacked, while both the Germans and the Dutch would retain control of ISAF as long as possible, until 2006 if necessary. Greece was indifferent, while France was unsupportive. France particularly did not support the Operation ENDURING FREEDOM/ISAF combination and was not prepared to expand ISAF outside of Kabul because of the security situation.[23] Finding a lead nation remained a difficult proposition.

Iraq continued to loom in the background throughout the whole Canadian Afghanistan planning process. The Iraq Liaison Team reported that the conceptual structure of a 'Canadian JTF South West Asia battalion' was completed. The deployment was based on several assumptions. First, that Canada would not participate in Phase III operations, that is, ground combat. Second, that Canada would maintain Operation ENDURING FREEDOM operations with "current assets," that is, the maritime interception force in the Indian Ocean and presumably special operations forces. Most importantly, the team emphasized that it was "unlikely that the Canadian Forces can contribute [to Iraq Phase IV] because of the upcoming ISAF commitment." Instead, to maintain saliency with the Americans on Iraq, various Canadian entities (read: CIDA) would be encouraged to contribute non-military governance capabilities, humanitarian assistance, financial support for reconstruction, rehabilitation of the civil infrastructure, and the reconstitution of governance institutions in Iraq.[24]

On 25 March 2003, the Government of Canada decided not to participate in the Iraq conflict and notified the military authorities of that decision.[25] Yet, in mid-April, there was some prevarication. The planning staffs were asked to brief the Minister of National Defence on "possible participation in Phase IV operations in Iraq" – the stabilization phase. Once again, planners suggested that some combination of the Disaster Assistance Response Team, ships and land forces might be useful.[26] Potential Iraq commitments would continue in the background well into 2004 but would have no further influence on events once Canada was up and running in Kabul.

While the planning staffs grappled with multiple potential commitments, small numbers of Canadians were already on the ground in Afghanistan reporting back on the situation in both southern Afghanistan and in Kabul in March 2003. These included a liaison officer with Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, two Canadian members of the Afghan National Army design team, a Royal Military College of Canada history professor, and then a five-man Canadian Strategic Reconnaissance Team (referred to as the 'strategic recce') led by MGen Andrew Leslie. The reality of the situation on the ground was fed into the Land Staff and the DCDS planners. Afghanistan, it turned out, was seething and ready to explode into a combination of ethnic violence and power broker jockeying for Kabul, while insurgent activity maintained a low but steady level of activity in the south supported by entities in Pakistan. The urgency underscoring all of this was not in the NATO analysis coming back to Canada, nor was it in the forefront of Canada's preliminary planning efforts initially. The realities on the ground as reported by these sources played a role in the structuring of the Canadian force that would eventually deploy later in 2003.[27]

Meanwhile, NATO was making headway on deciding how it would handle ISAF. The North Atlantic Council approved NATO's continued and enhanced support to ISAF while it looked at taking over the force. In time, Canadian diplomats mounted a tactful offensive to convince NATO members to accept NATO command of ISAF.

Kabul Mandate Development

By mid-April, NATO commands (two of which were working at cross-purposes according to Canadian planners)[28] had developed a concept of operations without conducting a detailed reconnaissance of the situation in Kabul and without reference to Canadian assessments. NATO planners believed that the objectives of the 2001 Bonn Agreement and the presence of ISAF were to "establish a politically neutral environment for a loya jirga to select Transitional Administration members." They were correct in that an earlier emergency loya jirga had been protected by a British-led non-NATO ISAF. They further believed that the various UN resolutions and the United Kingdom-brokered Military Technical Agreement provided the basis for ISAF involvement in training the Afghan security forces. There was, however, no reference to the American-controlled TF Phoenix, which was already on the ground and had been working on this last task for some time. However, NATO planners did accept that the current priority task was to support the Transitional Administration in the provision of security in Kabul and environs. UN Security Council Resolution 1444 was considered the legal basis for ISAF's mandate.[29]

NATO objectives now were to "demonstrate NATO's readiness to enhance ISAF support" and to "assist the Transitional Authority in maintaining security in Kabul so it can rebuild the country, and have a stable security environment and multi-ethnic representative government." The threat to this, in priority, was considered to consist of[30]

- regional warlords;
- social tension;
- rocket attacks;
- civil unrest; and
- anti-government forces.

Notwithstanding the inclusion of a tactic (rockets) as an operational-level threat, the placement of what NATO planners simplistically labelled 'regional warlords' at the top of the

list is significant. The reality was – and the NATO planners did not yet understand – that those 'regional warlords' controlled conventional armies with heavy weapons, armoured fighting vehicles and even Scud launchers; they had a high level of legitimacy among the ethnic populations they were drawn from; and they ruled over half of Afghanistan, not just the capital. They *were* the power brokers in the country, not the leaders of some enclave in Bosnia or Kosovo.

NATO planners established some limitations on what a NATO ISAF would do. ISAF was not there to protect Afghanistan from an external threat. It was not to conduct offensive operations against the remaining Taliban in Afghanistan (which cut across the last threat on the list). ISAF was not to conduct humanitarian assistance on its own but was to work to support international aid organizations and non-governmental organizations. ISAF would conduct mine-clearing and explosive ordnance disposal operations. The organization would not become involved, as the Stabilization Force had in Bosnia, in criminal tribunals and all of the messy paraphernalia associated with People Indicted for War Crimes (called PIFWCs or 'piff-wicks'). Again, the sore points from NATO's Balkans experiences came into play in the run-up to its involvement in Afghanistan.[31]

Subsequently, NATO planners established the following as a preliminary ISAF task list:[32]

1. maintain a secure environment for the Transitional Administration in Kabul;
2. control Kabul International Airport;
3. provide force protection;
4. assist the United Nations with disarmament [Demobilization demilitarization and reintegration (DDR)];
5. assist the Transitional Administration in training security forces;
6. contribute to humanitarian assistance support; and
7. provide disaster relief.

The strategic recce team's final report at the end of April concluded that the current commanders of (non-NATO) ISAF would be "extremely pleased" to have Canada join ISAF and that "There is no clear, organized force opposed to the presence of ISAF. However the likelihood of turmoil remains high." Kabul was calm but unstable; there was a perceived

growing rift between the Tajiks and Pashtuns, with Mohammad Qasim Fahim of the Northern Alliance opposed to a foreign military presence in Afghanistan. According to the strategic recce team, the "Taliban and Al Qaeda do not present a military threat to ISAF. These terrorist organizations [do, however, have] the capability to form small cells for attacks."[33]

The most important and critical aspect of any future ISAF mission would be handling the security for the planned October 2003 Constitutional Loya Jirga, an event designed to get all factions in Afghanistan 'under one tent' and hammer out what form of government Afghanistan should have. Only then could elections take place. There was a nascent Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) process to reduce the size of the various armies that had fought in the civil war (of course, the Taliban had already been forcibly disarmed by Operation ENDURING FREEDOM), and enhancement of DDR was considered a key factor in reducing the potential for interference with "the Bonn Agreement." There were Afghan commanders, of course, who had a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Successful DDR of the Kabul area could lead to expanded DDR throughout the country and, in the view of the Canadian strategic recce team, would enhance security generally. Failure of DDR in Kabul would cause problems elsewhere over the long term, with the unstated implication that Afghanistan would revert to a situation akin to 1992–1996 when the anti-communist commanders turned on each other and fought a three-year civil war. This, as we know, set the conditions for the Taliban to emerge in the first place.[34]

The strategic recce report established tasks for any potential Canadian-commanded ISAF KMNB:[35]

- maintain a high-profile patrol presence;
- protect key points;
- coordinate convoy security from Kabul to Bagram Air Field; and
- perform quick reaction force tasks.

If a Canadian battle group were part of KMNB, its tasks might include the following:[36]

- profile patrols in a given area of operation and joint foot patrols in urban areas;
- situational awareness; and
- reaction to major incidents.

The Emergence of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams

While the staffs compiled their assessments on ISAF in Kabul, there were concurrent and significant developments on the Operation ENDURING FREEDOM front that would ultimately have long-term effects on the Canadian Army and its approach to operations in Afghanistan. Lt Gen DeLong's request for a Canadian PRT in February 2003 was the result of a nearly six-month process. Back in October-November 2002, OEF planners examined the problem in Afghanistan and concluded that certain provinces had potential 'sanctuary' areas in them and, so to generate a broader secure environment in Afghanistan generally, these areas needed a constant presence to deny the expansion of those areas. There were not enough OEF forces in Afghanistan to do so-and the planners did not believe that ISAF expansion was a solution. There were a number of reasons: the circumstances in each province were unique and required unique solutions; ISAF was not mandated to operate outside of Kabul; and NATO would take time to agree on expansion and time was of the essence. OEF's particular concern at this point were the provinces adjacent to Pakistan and the low-level insurgency that was active along the Durand Line.[37]

The idea that small, unobtrusive teams could work alongside the Afghan militia forces at the provincial level in order to remove the "causes of instability" and "enable Afghan institutions" led to the idea of Joint Regional Teams. The idea was to group representatives from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), UNAMA, and non-governmental organizations with security sector integration representatives (Afghan security force training and development personnel) with a protective force alongside the emergent Afghan leadership in each province. Establishing these organizations would generate better ties between those remote areas and the Afghan Transitional Administration in Kabul. There would be enhanced intelligence collection in certain provinces which would feed the hunt for Al Qaeda and Taliban leadership targets as well as assist in conventional force targeting. In that case, a Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha of 12 to 16 men would, in theory, become part of the structure.[38]

By early 2003, the JRTs were re-named Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). Their role was to "assist with removing the causes of instability" by "extending the Authority of the central government; assist in establishing stability and security; and enable reconstruction." In effect, the PRTs were directed at engaging the local Afghan leadership that was already in place and displacing militias with an organized security force responsive to the government as much as they were about addressing the insurgency. In addition, there was not a lot of hard information about each province's reconstruction needs, and some means had to be found to gather and address them systematically.

The test PRT at Gardez was considered successful. The Bamiyan and Konduz PRTs subsequently opened up by early 2003. Then Operation ENDURING FREEDOM ran into manning problems. Stiff bureaucratic competition for manpower in other areas in Afghanistan and, most particularly, Iraq, reduced the number of available effectives to the point that it could not fully carry out its plans.[39]

On 25 April 2003, the Canadian representatives at CENTCOM were asked again about Canada taking on a PRT, possibly the Parwan PRT near Kabul. The staff was fully briefed on the PRT laydown: out of eight planned PRTs, the Americans had three, the British were going to take Mazar-e Sharif, while the French and Germans were looking at Herat. There were problems finding a lead nation for three other PRTs.[40]

The PRT concept, stabilized by then, was much larger than the original JRTs. It consisted of a Political Advisor, a civilian police representative, a civil-military cooperation/civil affairs coordination team for humanitarian assistance, a robust intelligence collection system with an emphasis on human intelligence, information operations and psychological operations capacity, surveillance assets, contracting capability, public health assessment capacity, personnel from USAID or an equivalent development agency for assessing humanitarian assistance needs, plus a protection force.[41]

Conceptually, the PRT was to establish an understated presence and "effect change through non-violent means but be able to protect itself" while "marginalizing the causes of instability" by sharing information and enhancing reconstruction efforts. The PRTs were also to contribute to "creating a safe and secure environment" by "monitoring reform activities, facilitating negotiations to defuse tension, and assisting in the development of the Afghan National Army and Police."[42]

The DCDS staff in Ottawa concluded that "the Canadian Forces is not currently capable of leading or contributing to a PRT. The specialist forces are not available due to other commitments….however, the PRT concept could be linked to our exit strategy of our ISAF commitment."[43]

The Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Political Advisor at the Canadian headquarters in Tampa at CENTCOM, Gavin Buchan, was a proponent of Canadian involvement with PRTs. He argued that the PRTs were "an attempt to promote constructive dialogue" between a neutralist non-governmental organization aid community, UNAMA, and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in the future direction of Afghan reconstruction. It was "untried and in some ways quite radical especially when you consider that it is coming from the [U.S.] military….the odds of PRTs becoming an important factor in the stabilization of Afghanistan are steadily improving." Subtextually, the message was that if Canada was going to play a positive role in reconstruction over the long term, the PRT was the way to go.[44]

At this point in May 2003, DND and DFAIT policy planners and their ministers agreed that "the overall strategic intent of the Government of Canada is to prevent Afghanistan from relapsing into a failed state," implying that terrorist groups like Al Qaeda would move back in and use it as a safe haven once again.[45] The situation in Afghanistan was deemed to be "stable but precarious" with most of the violence in the east and south. Violence had increased since January 2003 and "extremists" were reorganizing and employing more sophisticated tactics.[46]

Canadian options were: join ISAF in Kabul; take an Operation ENDURING FREEDOM PRT; do both missions simultaneously, or either mission sequentially. The idea was slowly coalescing that Canada could commit to ISAF in Kabul for the short term in a leadership role, then shift to an Operation ENDURING FREEDOM PRT as a way out of that commitment but toward a longer-term commitment with the PRT. Unstated was that both NATO and the United States could be assuaged while still contributing in a salient way to the effort in Afghanistan, and at the same time staying out of Iraq.

Indeed, the planners did not even consider a long-term commitment to ISAF in Kabul as viable. Canada could provide the deputy commander, ISAF headquarters personnel staff, a brigade headquarters, and an infantry battalion group, but Canada lacked the higher-level communications and intelligence capacity to handle that commitment beyond a year.[47] Left unstated was that maintaining 50 to 100 or so people in a PRT with no unit or formation-sized commitment could be extended almost indefinitely.

In May 2003, the general direction of Canadian planning focused on the ISAF/Kabul option and how to fulfill it. The Canadian measurement criteria, as established by J3 International, were dubbed "S M L": Security, Medical, and Logistics. If the various capabilities were not filled in the planning matrix, the mission would be problematic. Good Canadian planners try to make things happen with what they have, even if what they have is substandard. That was the pattern in the 1990s and in the Cold War. The stakes were different this time. For example, helicopters would be required for casualty evacuation. Canada had dispensed with the medium-lift CH-47 Chinook and replaced it with the CH-146 Griffon, an executive transport modified for surveillance operations. Could the CH-146 be used for casualty evacuation? Maybe. The CDS, a helicopter pilot, then said no. That meant that someone else in NATO had to provide casualty evacuation helicopters for ISAF in Kabul.

The planners identified a number of capability gaps: there had to be a Role-3-level hospital, that is, one capable of a full spectrum of medical support including a surgical capacity. Another gap was the casualty evacuation helicopters. One of three battle groups in Kabul would lack a battalion-sized headquarters because other nations had only contributed infantry companies and not full battalions. Someone had to maintain and protect

Kabul International Airport, ISAF's logistical lifeline. That would take nearly a battalion plus technical troops. ISAF HQ needed a security company to protect it. NATO planners assumed that Canada would provide all this, but Canada could not. When other NATO members were reticent, the Canadian representatives told them that if another country did not provide a Role-3 hospital, Canada would pull out of the discussions.[48] To keep things moving along, Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe used the Canadian Role-3 threat on at least three occasions to leverage various commitments from other NATO countries.[49]

BGen Marquis Hainse, the Canadian head of the planning mission, noted:

> The most glaring point that resulted from this conference was the requirement for Canada to begin our exit strategy early on. It was evident by the lack of willingness to commit forces that it is getting more difficult for nations to make overseas troop contributions due to ever shrinking defence budgets and overextension of forces.[50]

This applied to Canada as well. In 2003, the Canadian Army was committed to several other overseas operations in addition to Afghanistan, something easily forgotten in the wake of 9/11 and Operation APOLLO. There was nearly a logistics battalion on the Golan Heights with the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, plus observers and staff scattered throughout four other Middle East missions. A battle group, with logistics support, was in Bosnia with the NATO-led Stabilization Force. Three missions were ongoing in Africa: Sierra Leone, Darfur, and the Congo. And there was still Haiti.[51] All of these operations and associated Canadian representatives still had to be monitored and supported by staff in Ottawa that was drawn deeply into Iraq and Afghanistan contingency planning. There were only so many hours in a day and only so many people – again, the effects of the Government of Canada's 1990s over-commitment of forces and concurrent retraction of financial resources.

That said, Afghanistan increasingly became the main option and the most important international commitment for Canada. Plans were made to reduce or eliminate other commitments: the Army would pull its forces out of Bosnia in 2004 and reduce the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force on the Golan Heights around the same time. The trajectory was established: Canada would continue to be committed to Afghanistan. What fell out of the NATO negotiations was that Canada would command KMNB, 'enable' it as much as possible, and send a battle group. Germany would provide certain other 'enablers' and the force commander, but Canada would send the deputy force commander. Then Canada would take over command of ISAF in Kabul once Canada reduced in other geographical areas and could provide more headquarters horsepower.[52]

What is not commonly understood but is extremely important to note is that the commitment to lead ISAF in Kabul was for one year. Canada's commitment to ISAF was *not* limited to one year. There is a tendency to view Canada's Afghanistan commitments in a piecemeal fashion. That is tempting, but it distorts the planning intent of the day. The Canadian Army was supposed to remain part of ISAF even after Canada relinquished command of the force. This was a deliberate pause to re-set the Army for future commitments to Afghanistan, whatever those might be, after what would be a trying year in Kabul. At this point in the process, it looked as though NATO would take over a number of PRTs outside of Kabul and then expand throughout the country. In other words, Canada was looking at a PRT commitment as early as 2003 in part as a means to get out of Kabul. And, once again, this was a relatively open discussion, not one hidden away in the deep recesses of the bureaucracy. DFAIT representatives were increasingly coming to the conclusion that the way forward was some form of Canadian PRT commitment.[53]

Concurrent with these political developments and the force structuring staffing process, in June 2003 the Canadian policy process produced a request to the Prime Minister for approval of strategic guidance on Afghanistan. In effect, it was similar to the strategic guidance established in 2001.[54] Nearly a month later, the Minister of National Defence was informed that this guidance was acceptable.[55] Operation ATHENA, the Canadian mission to Kabul, was finally underway.

ENDNOTES

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11. CDS, "Afghanistan/Iraq Planning Update-Briefing to the MND" (7 October 2002).
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17. Letter DCDS to CDS, "CF Operations in Afghanistan/Iraq" (February 2003).
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23. "Visit Report – Visit to Potential ISAF Partner Nations" (28 February 2003); Briefing deck, "Military to Military Discussions" (24-27 February 2003).
24. Message, "Iraq Liaison Team" (24 March 2003).
25. Memorandum COS J3 to CLO PJHQ (25 March 2003).
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27. The author was the RMC history professor and was involved in some of these processes, including reporting directly to the Land Staff within 48 hours of returning to Canada from a protracted period in Afghanistan observing both ISAF and OEF operations. Major René Melançon was the Liaison Officer to OEF in Bagram. Though some treated Maj Melançon's reports as alarmist, they were in fact accurate and reflected the imperceptibly deteriorating situation in the south. MGen Leslie's visit to Kabul was marked by attempts by in situ international entities to downplay the tensions and risk level in the capital, but these were dismissed by MGen Leslie as transparent attempts to manipulate Canadian perceptions.
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CALM BUT NOT STABLE:

OPERATION ATHENA IN KABUL, AUGUST-DECEMBER 2003

In the wake of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM's success, the Canadian Army maintained a presence in the capital city of Kabul during the tumultuous years of 2003 to 2005. It was a crucial period where Afghans decided on the future trajectory of their country and it set the context for the next decade of Canadian involvement in Afghanistan. Canada's soldiers played a key role in establishing and preserving the protective measures for those processes. These measures were not limited to static protective guard. Indeed, they were a combination of deft and politically astute actions taken by a small out-gunned force in a vast urban area. That spectrum of violence could range from demonstrations, to terrorist action, to conventional operations involving artillery and armour. Enemies and potential enemies lurked in every dark corner of Kabul. This was a campaign totally unlike the Army's involvement in Operation APOLLO and completely different from the subsequent campaign in Kandahar province. Kabul in 2003 was a crucial turning point in stabilizing Afghanistan, and the Canadian Army was at the centre of it.

Kabul: Vital Ground

Kabul was problematic on the political/military front. During the jihad in the 1980s, regional commanders and their supporters emerged and formed resistance groups, some of which developed political parties. These forces coalesced into the anti-Soviet Mujahideen. There was no overall central command of these factions. All had international and regional sponsors, some of which tried to group them and streamline logistics in order to assert some form of control. The surviving commanders and their guerilla forces, as well as some communist government commanders who defected with their formations, took control of Kabul in 1992. Over the course of the next year, these commanders and their armies fought amongst themselves with the city of Kabul as the primary battleground. That war was not just a military-on-military fight. It was closer to what was seen in Sarajevo than any other conflict at the time: kidnappings, rape, ethnic cleansing, and the use of artillery against civilians were part and parcel of factional operations during that time.[1]

This conflict was as violent as it was convoluted and as a result had a direct bearing on how ISAF was to go about its mission in Kabul, precisely because the commanders from 1992-1993 were the same people that took the city again in 2001-2002. During the mid-1990s, the effects of that collapse on the rest of the country led to the creation of

the Taliban by entities in Pakistan to protect their interests in the south. The victorious commanders from 1992 reformed into various configurations and alliances to fight back against the Taliban movement as it spread to the north, while at the same time maintaining previous antagonisms generated by the fighting in 1992-1993. The possibility that Kabul would become a battleground between them again was real.

The Bonn Agreement was supposed to solidify initial stabilization efforts by introducing an UN-mandated security force and a number of uncoordinated programmes to back an Afghan Interim Administration. This had buy-in from the victorious Afghan parties in November 2001. Throughout Kabul in 2002, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM special operations forces focused on hunting Taliban leadership targets and tracking down Al Qaeda laptops while ISAF (in its pre-NATO incarnation) mounted visible patrols in the city. The victorious factions, fully equipped with tanks and artillery, remained in barracks throughout the city, warily eyeing one another and the "internationals." The future was uncertain. If a political process producing some form of government did not take hold in 2003, the people of Afghanistan would find themselves right back in the midst of multi-factional violence, just as they had in 1992-1993. Strategically, the only beneficiaries of that chaos would be Pakistan, the Taliban, and Al Qaeda.

Kabul City, with its nearly 3 million people, was the chessboard that this game would be played on. ISAF troops with Balkans experience could be forgiven, perhaps, for looking at Kabul as if it were Sarajevo or Pristina. Yes, Kabul was in a mountainous region and yes, Kabul had ethnically divided armed militias. Kabul, however, was a huge area, and the number and experience of the armed factions far exceeded those of Bosnia or Kosovo. Motivations were diverse; it was not strictly an ethnic conflict, even though there were ethnic overtones, and there was, as always in Afghanistan, an economic layer underlying everything.

Kabul was surrounded by mountains but also had a crescent-shaped line of hills that cut the southwestern districts off from the other two-thirds of the city. A small number of passes connected the two portions, including those adjacent to the vital "TV Hill," a former restaurant turned fortified communications outpost that overlooked everything. Homes and compounds were built terrace-like on the hills, each a natural fortress. The northern part of the city was flatter; it held the commercial centre of the city and Kabul Afghanistan International Airport (or "KAIA"), the main ISAF logistics base. Industrial neighbourhoods sprawled east along the highway that went past ISAF's Camp Warehouse, home to KMNB HQ, and led to the Khyber Pass and Pakistan. A more rural district, Bagrami, lay to the south of the highway down to the chain of hills, while the Shomali Plain extended north of Kabul Airport to Bagram Air Base, the main Operation ENDURING FREEDOM base in northern Afghanistan. (See Figure 4-1)

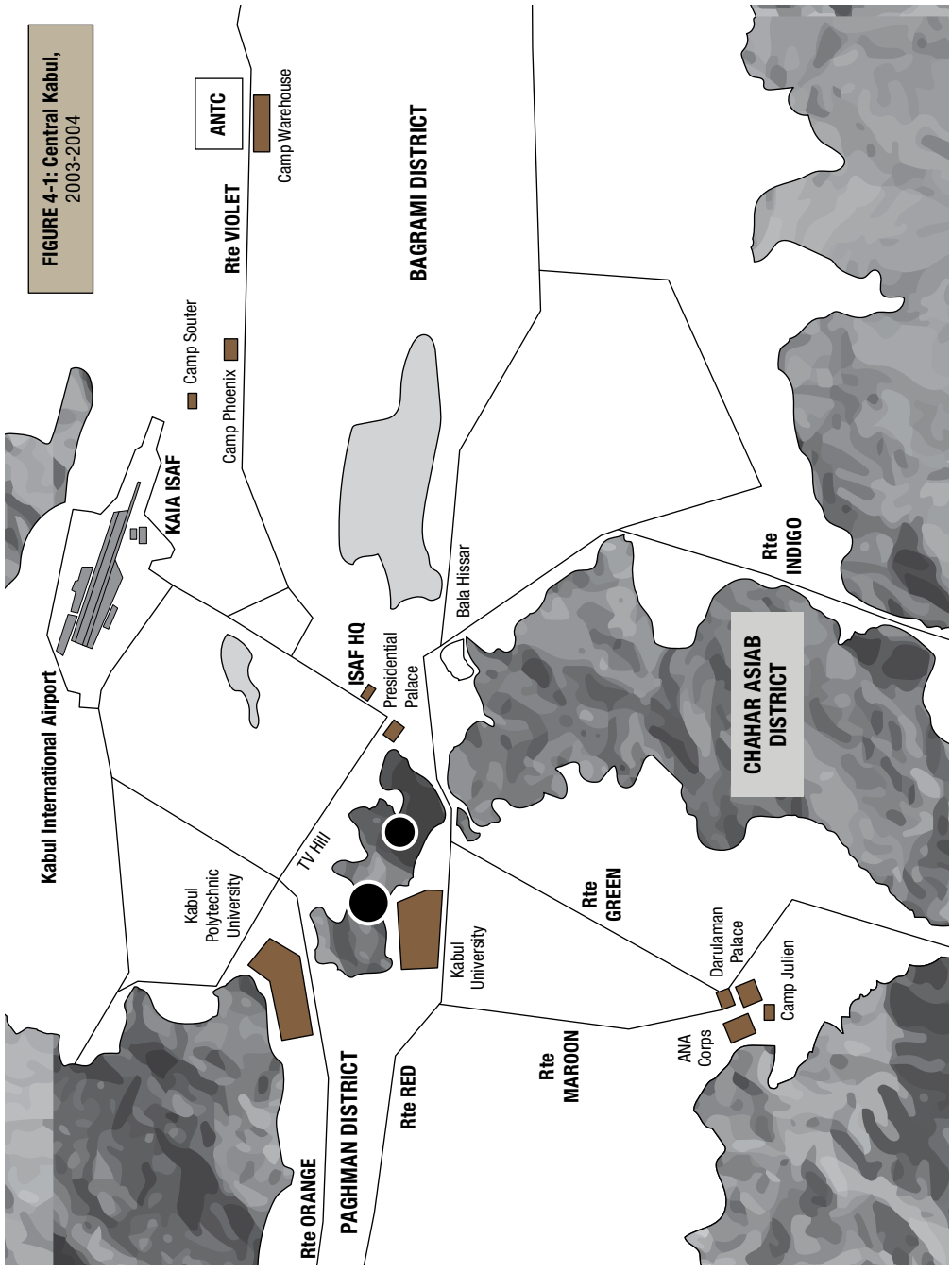


Figure 4-1: Central Kabul, 2003-2004

Photo Credit: Author

The Canadian ISAF contingent was primarily based at Camp Julien, constructed next to the Darulaman Palace, in the western part of Kabul. This area saw heavy shelling and rocketing during the 1992-1993 period when Afghan Mujahideen factions fought for control over the capital.

What eventually became the Canadian area of operations was in the south-west part of the city. It was the least desirable of the ISAF patrol areas from a force protection perspective as it was the furthest from the Kabul airport and could be interdicted at the passes. These areas held the university and other higher-education institutions, and the traditional Afghan seat of power: the Darulaman Palace, site of the 1979 Soviet coup. There were two main rural districts, Chahar Asiab to the south, which abutted Logar province, and Paghman district, which was adjacent to Wardak province. Both of these mountainous provinces were riddled with factions not sympathetic to attempts to stabilize Kabul.

The urban areas of Kabul did not correspond to the layout or the structure of a Canadian city. There were no traffic lights, for example. Older parts of the city and the mountain neighbourhoods were not conducive to motor traffic. As for street signs, there were few – large traffic circles were given nicknames by Canadian soldiers: Massoud Circle, because of the huge billboards of Ahmed Shah Massoud, or "Holy Fuck Circle" because of the chaos surrounding that particular shopping district. Organizationally, ISAF troops referred to the city by police districts or "PDs." For example, the Canadian area had PD 3, the university area; PD 7, which abutted Chahar Asiab district; PD 5, near Paghman district; PD 6, where the Canadian camp was located; and PD 15. These areas were mixtures of residential compounds, decrepit strip mall-like businesses, ad hoc agricultural areas, and rubble from collapsed buildings of every variety. The roads were in poor shape. There was no running water. Few neighbourhoods had any form of electricity. There were wrecked vehicles everywhere. Kabul is at 1 800 metres in altitude, so oxygen is itself in short supply. In many ways, it was a near post-apocalyptic environment that Canadian soldiers were confronted with.

Who's Who in Kabul

Every post-apocalyptic environment needs a post-apocalyptic army and Kabul was no exception. Kabul had several. In a general sense, there were three types. The first were the conventional formations, led by the major anti-Taliban military leaders. To some extent, they resembled combat-depleted conventional formations; an armoured brigade might have seven tanks, for example, or an infantry division might boast about 4 500 effectives. There were also units led by commanders that had allegiance to one (or more) of the anti-Taliban military leaders, but whose forces bore direct allegiance to their immediate commanders. Then there were the remnants of defeated factions, factions that had fought conventionally in formations or units but had been destroyed and scattered by the coalition onslaught. They also had their sub-commander-led units that in some cases bore allegiance to no one. (See Figure 4-2)

In a general sense, the anti-Taliban factions transitioned into a pseudo-standing army that ISAF referred to as the AMF (Afghan militia forces). They still bore allegiance to their various leaders. The more fanatical members of the pro-Taliban factions transitioned into fragmented terrorist groups in the city, and guerrillas in the rural areas.

FIGURE 4-2:
Afghan Militia Forces – Dispositions in Kabul,
2003

Figure 4-2: Afghan Militia Forces – Dispositions in Kabul, 2003

Photo Credit: Author

These three pictures are a panorama taken in March 2003 from TV Hill of what became the Canadian area of operations in western Kabul. The first picture shows the intersection of Route Red and Route Green, with Green leading to the Darulaman Palace in the distance. The second shows Kabul University, while the third is Paghman district and Route Orange in the distance.

Photo Credit: Author

Photo Credit: Author

At the same time, TF Phoenix, the United States-led training group, worked with the British, French, and Canadians to build up the Afghan National Army (or ANA). The Afghan Army was not much larger than a brigade in 2002 and maybe a division in 2003, but could not really operate above the battalion (called *kandak* in Afghanistan) level. The Germans had responsibility under the Bonn Agreement for police training. There was some semblance of police organization in the city, much more than elsewhere in the country, but it was far from a professional force.

Although it was difficult for some Bosnia-acclimatized troops to grasp, Kabul was a bewildering mix of political, religious, and ethnic factions. In Bosnia, it was fairly clear – the Bosnian Serbs had their districts, the Bosnian Croats had theirs, while the Bosnian Muslims had enclaves. This was replicated to some extent in Sarajevo. Animosity was generally predictable along ethnic and geographic lines. It was not as clear in Kabul and throughout Afghanistan. Too many factions had shifted their alignments in various combinations over years, much like a kaleidoscope.[2] In many ways, it resembled Lebanon more than Bosnia.

The word 'warlord' is pejorative, implies a lack of political acumen, and is over-used in the Afghan context. 'Factional leader' is a little too clinical and carries with it an implied lack of viciousness. 'Power broker', on the other hand, is a much better descriptive, combining political ability with ruthlessness. In 2003, the power brokers were in control,

not the Afghan Transitional Administration led by Hamid Karzai that was supported by the international community and protected by ISAF.

The main players included Rashid Dostum, leading the Uzbeks who were formed into the Junbish movement. He was a former communist general who changed sides in 1992 and assisted the Mujahideen forces in taking Kabul. The Tajiks were represented by several commanders: Qasim Mohammad "Fahim Khan," who replaced Ahmed Shah Massoud after his assassination, was the military commander associated with Burhanuddin Rabbani's party, Jamiat-e Islami. "Bismillah Khan" Mohammadi, Mohammad "Atta" Noor, and Abdul Basir Salangi were other Tajik commanders who had forces in the city, but there was no real unity among them. Bismillah Khan and Fahim Khan, for example, loathed each other.

Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, a Pashtun, led the Ittihad party, which was a fundamentalist Wahhabist organization funded by various Gulf states. Back in the 1980s, Sayyaf's facilities trained Al Qaeda leader Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and took money from Osama bin Laden during those years.[3] Other Pashtun commanders in the city aligned with Sayyaf included Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Sher Khan, and Abdul Mumtaz. These were all Sunni Muslim forces. Then there were the Shi'a parties: the Harakat-i Islami and the Hezb-e Wahdat. Wahdat was Hazara in ethnicity, while Harakat was not. Mohammad Karim Khalili led Wahdat while Haji Mohammad Mohaqqeq led a splinter group of Wahdat. It was Sayyaf's forces that ethnically cleansed the Hazaras in 1993, so there was a natural antagonism that existed between the Ittihad and the Wahdat. The fact that Jamiat-e Islami joined in the orgy of violence during that time produced another possible fault line between some of the Tajik forces and the Shi'as and Hazaras.[4]

Why does all of this matter? Simply put, the Canadian area of operations in western Kabul had been the battleground between these factions in 1992-1993 as they jockeyed for power. There were long-term effects from that struggle, including massive damage to the infrastructure and the social structure in these neighbourhoods. The Taliban had done little or nothing to rectify living conditions during their six years in power after the fighting.

Each faction had armies of varying capacities, numbers, and capabilities. All wanted influence on the future of Afghanistan, mostly at the expense of their rivals. Fundamentally, all of the power brokers were simply motivated by power and its benefits. There was no serious long-term vision expressed by these leaders in any of the years prior to the Bonn Agreement of 2001. It is critical to note that some factions had monetary and military support from Saudi Arabia, others from Iran, and many from Pakistan. It was not always clear how the national agendas of those countries played out through their Afghan contacts, but it was evident that Sunni-Shi'a rivalry was one layer, while Saudi-Pakistani containment of Iranian influence was another – or was it an extension of the ancient Mughal-Safavid

rivalry? Entities in Pakistan wanted a destabilized Afghanistan to avoid a two-front strategic problem with India. Other entities wanted a destabilized Afghanistan to avoid interfering with narco-trafficking profits. Determining who was doing what for whom became a major preoccupation for Canadian intelligence staffs.

The only factional leader at the time who appeared to have any vision was Hamid Karzai. The process that put Hamid Karzai into the Afghan Transitional Administration president's chair started with the use of his tribal and ethnic influence by American forces in southern Afghanistan in the successful bid to seize Kandahar City from the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The need to have a Pashtun leader in Kabul that could seemingly rise above the ethnic and political rivalries and ensure that the south did not break off from the north (or the north break off from the south, for that matter) was paramount – and recognized during the early days of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. Karzai was acceptable to the power brokers precisely because he had little or no power[5] – and some of the power brokers were in the government as part of the transitional administration. The Northern Alliance had successfully bullied the UN to keep ISAF's size small enough so it could not pose a military threat to their activities.[6] All in all, the situation looked to be a good one for the power brokers. Operation EUNDURING FREEDOM would kill off Al Qaeda, the Taliban and Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin (HiG) for them; those interlopers from Pakistan would be screened off. The Karzai-led administration, they believed, would produce much light but little heat and generate a pause so the power brokers could jockey about and figure out what the next moves were. Perhaps ISAF could be enticed to depart. Perhaps Operation ENDURING FREEDOM could be manipulated to kill political rivals. Then the game between them would start all over again as it had in 1992-1993. Or would it? None of them anticipated what the international community was about to do to prevent it. Certainly none of them anticipated that Canada would play such a central role in the process.

The Canadian Army in Kabul: Structure, Command, and Planning

Once the decision was made as to which part of the city the Canadian contingent would deploy and operate in, the Theatre Activation Team from the Joint Operations Group in Kingston, Ontario, flew into Kabul Afghanistan International Airport in the summer of 2003 and started work with contract construction personnel on Camp Julien. Rows of Weatherhaven tents and a perimeter of Hesco bastion walls and towers sprung up between what the soldiers called the King's Palace and the Queen's Palace. Canadian liaison officers at Camp Warehouse, the headquarters of Kabul Multinational Brigade over in the eastern district across the road from the Pol-e Charkhi storage site, and downtown at ISAF HQ prepared to receive the 1910 members of the incoming Canadian contingent in early August 2003.

The in-flow of personnel went relatively smoothly. The state of the equipment on arrival, however, left much to be desired. Problems encountered by Operation KINETIC in Kosovo in 1999 repeated themselves in Kabul in 2003. For example, Coyote surveillance vehicles arrived from 3 Canadian Support Group in Montreal with no forward-looking infrared systems. One Coyote even had a cracked hull. A vital piece of equipment necessary for mounting the 25mm main armament was found 10 days after arrival in a signals truck.[7]

On 11 August 2003, NATO took command of ISAF, transitioning from a NATO-supported command to a NATO corps-level command – a corps that essentially commanded a brigade and an airport. The dark blue flag with the white compass rose of the North Atlantic Alliance now flew at these headquarters. The predominance of German resources in ISAF dictated that the Commander of ISAF be a German general. Canada, as the second largest troop contributor, nominated MGen Andrew Leslie, who became the Deputy Commander (DComd). At this point, Commander ISAF commanded KMNB, the logistics contingent at the Kabul Afghanistan International Airport, and ISAF HQ and its troops. Discussions were underway as to whether ISAF would expand and take over the German-American pilot PRT project in Konduz, but that was highly contentious at the time. Indeed, the ISAF area of operations in Kabul itself was under dispute: there were vast unpatrolled areas between Bagram Air Field and Kabul and to the west and east of the city, which ostensibly were to be ISAF-controlled. Of note, ISAF HQ troops consisted of liaison teams, human intelligence teams, a "Commander ISAF Special Recce Platoon," and a CIMIC Coordination Centre (or CCC). The CCC became a key player in international development aspects of the mission. Canadian staff played a role in all of these functions in addition to ISAF HQ staff functions.

The predominant player in KMNB, in terms of numbers and capability, was Canada; therefore, BGen Peter Devlin became Commander KMNB. Its main forces consisted of a Canadian battalion group (3rd Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment, led by LCol Don Denne); a German battalion group with a Turkish infantry company attached; a French battalion group; a British infantry company; and an Italian force protection company for ISAF HQ. The Brigade troops came from nine different nations. The Military Police Company had Canadians, Romanians, Croatians, Germans, and Danes, while the Multinational Engineer Group had companies from Italy, Greece, and Spain. Explosive ordnance disposal was handled by Estonia, while the Signals Squadron was Canadian. Germany provided three CH-53 helicopters for medical evacuation. There were also German psychological operations (PSYOPS) and Norwegian CIMIC teams.[8] KMNB had about 1 500 combat arms soldiers, and 3 000 service support troops. (See Figures 4-3 and 4-4)

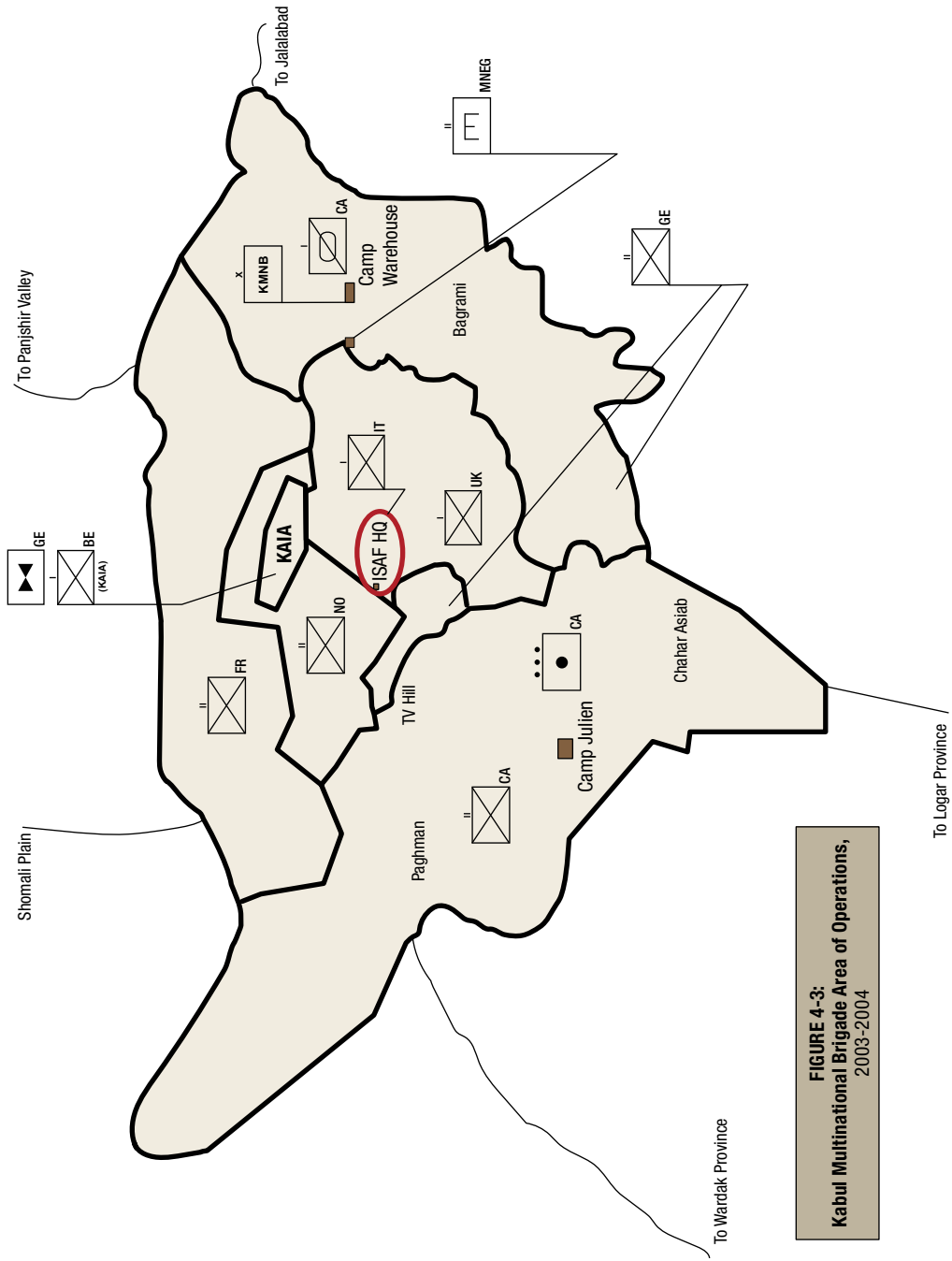


FIGURE 4-3:
Kabul Multinational Brigade Area of Operations,
2003-2004

Figure 4-3: Kabul Multinational Brigade Area of Operations, 2003-2004

FIGURE 4-4:
International Security Assistance Force Operating Areas,
2003-2004

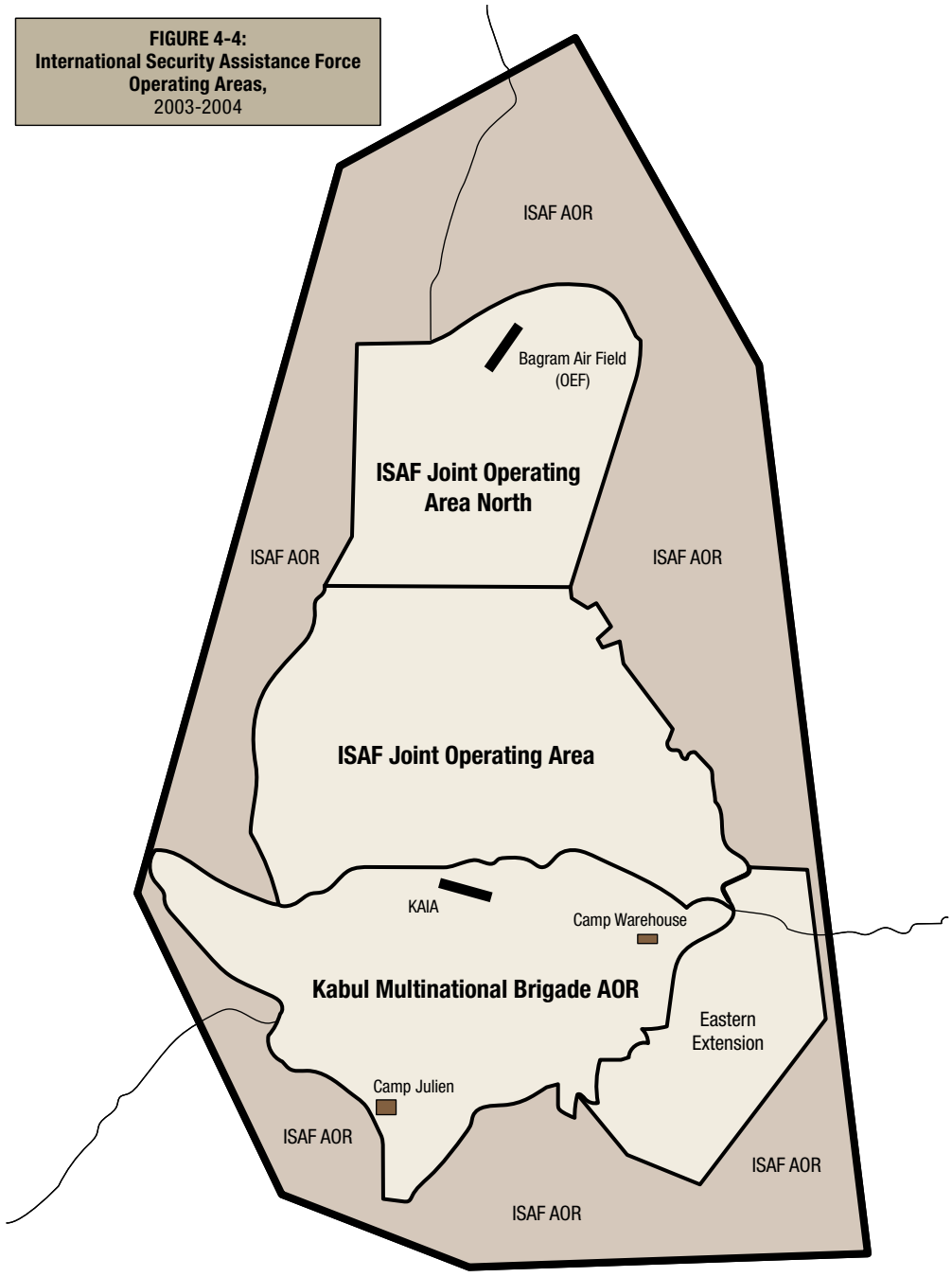


Figure 4-4: International Security Assistance Force Operating Areas, 2003-2004

Photo Credit: DND IS2003-2581a

Major-General Andrew Leslie, the Deputy Commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Kabul, was responsible for protecting the interim Afghan government and disrupting the numerous threats to the emergent political process.

When Canadian planners looked at the situation earlier in 2003, the original KMNB organization was considered firepower deficient. Given the volatility of the situation in Kabul and the fact that Canada was going to deploy on the other side of the city, far away from the airport, one of the infantry companies in the Canadian battalion group was equipped with LAV III armoured vehicles mounting 25mm cannons. A four-gun battery of 105mm LG-1 guns from 2nd Regiment, RCHA, also joined KMNB.[9] One pair of guns was stationed near KMNB HQ at Camp Warehouse while the other pair was at Camp Julien. These were supported by four ARTHUR (ARTillery HUnting Radars), leased from Ericsson Microwave, and mounted on BV-206 tracked chassis.

Photo Credit: DND IS2003-2498a

Canada agreed to contribute to ISAF as long as it was NATO-ized. Initially, International Security Assistance Force operations were limited to Kabul City and were in support of the Afghan Transitional Administration established by the Bonn Agreement of 2001.

A new type of Canadian Army organization was set up for the first time in Afghanistan; this was the ISTAR Company, which built on lessons learned from Operation APOLLO and Operation PALLADIUM related to the fusion and processing of surveillance system information. Led by Major Dyrald Cross, the ISTAR Company grouped several 'enablers' together. There were two five-car Coyote troops from the Royal Canadian Dragoons, about half with mast-mounted sensors. There was an electronic warfare troop from 2 (EW) Squadron. Canada deployed, for the first time in Afghanistan, a Human Intelligence team.

An all source intelligence centre and a geodetic support team were also part of ISTAR Company. The Germans also provided an electronic warfare team, as well as five 'LUNA' unmanned aerial vehicles (the Canadian Sperwer tactical unmanned aerial vehicle (TUAV) was deployed later in the tour). The idea behind ISTAR Company was to centralize all recce, surveillance, and processing assets in a single organization that reported to Commander KMNB and to remove 'stovepipes' identified on previous recces to Kabul.[10]

On the national side, TF Kabul included the Canadian National Command Element (NCE), led by Col Mark Hodgson and the National Support Element (NSE), led by LCol Chris Thurrott, and comprised a total of 350 logistics, administration, and signals personnel. There was also 24 Field Squadron, which consisted of 'declared' and 'undeclared' assets. One of the undeclared assets was the Improvised Explosive Device Destruction team equipped with explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) robots, and the other was remote-controlled M-113 armoured personnel carriers with rollers. Both remained Canadian national assets and not under NATO command. Similarly, a small Canadian special operations forces contingent was co-located with the task force; some acted as close protection party for Generals Leslie and Devlin, but they remained under the command of the DCDS and not the contingent in Kabul.[11]

Higher national command and control remained convoluted for the Canadian contingent, as it had during Operation APOLLO. Deputy Commander ISAF, a Canadian Major General, in theory, reported to a Canadian Lieutenant Colonel at the NCE in Kabul, who then reported to an Admiral back in Ottawa. The situation was rationalized when MGen Leslie was double-hatted as the Canadian contingent commander. This in part related to the theatre-level support element at Camp Mirage in Dubai, its relationship to forward-deployed forces in Afghanistan and the tendency of the DCDS organization to reach forward and micromanage operations during times of political agitation in Ottawa. Indeed, the DCDS had to approve every direct action operation or deployment of Canadian personnel outside the boundaries of Kabul.[12]

ISAF's command and control arrangements also evolved significantly during Canadian tenure. NATO ISAF reported to Allied Forces North Headquarters, which was led by a German general who reported to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe. At the same time, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM forces, American and coalition troops, reported to CENTCOM, the American regional command. ISAF's tasks involved stabilizing Kabul in concert with the Afghan Transitional Administration under a UN mandate, while Operation ENDURING FREEDOM stabilized rural provinces and hunted the remnants of Al Qaeda and the Taliban, also under a UN mandate. Both ISAF and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM occupied the same battlespace when it came to Kabul.

Photo Credit: DND KA2003-A332D

The volatile situation in Kabul throughout 2003 led Canadian Army planners to include artillery and TOW anti-tank missiles in the units deploying to Afghanistan. These LG-1 guns were part of this force protection package.

An understanding was reached whereby NATO SACEUR and Commander CENTCOM would liaise to deconflict operations in Kabul. CENTCOM's subordinate command in Afghanistan, CJTF-180, was tasked to support ISAF in an emergency. If ISAF had to extract from Kabul, ISAF units actually came under the command of CJTF-180.[13] There were a variety of sub-agreements related to United States provision of close air support, medical assistance and evacuation and intelligence support.[14]

Canada's writ in Afghanistan was thus: ISAF was authorized by UN Security Council resolution 1386 on 20 December 2001. The mission was to "Assist in the maintenance of security for Kabul and surrounding areas, in order to allow the Afghan Transitional Administration and UN authorities to function" and "Liaise with political, social, and religious leaders to ensure that the religious, ethnic, and cultural sensitivities of Afghanistan are respected within ISAF operations." ISAF tasks included:[15]

1. ensure freedom of movement within Kabul and surrounding areas;

2. provide force protection;

3. advise the Afghan Transitional Administration on security structures and issues;

4. assist in the operation of Kabul Afghanistan International Airport; and

5. assist in the reconstruction of the Afghan national armed forces.

In his analysis, NATO Commander-in-Chief Allied Forces North Europe established several objectives:[16]

1. demonstrate the Alliance's readiness to enhance its support of ISAF;

2. assist the Afghan Transitional Administration and UNAMA in maintaining security in Kabul and its environs so that it can rebuild the country and establish a stable society led by a broad-based multi-ethnic representative government; and

3. assist in maintaining a secure environment in Kabul.

The criteria for success was the handover of the transitional administration "to an Afghan representative government" which would have at its disposal "a fully constituted and functional civil and military security structure."[17]

After Canada agreed to take on the ISAF tasks in Afghanistan back in the spring of 2003, MGen Leslie, his staff, and the army staff analyzed the situation in Kabul and drafted a number of planning assumptions that became the basis of the KMNB Campaign Plan.

Working backwards from the end-state, Operation ATHENA hoped to generate a situation where the aid and reconstruction organizations could conduct operations uninhibited; develop a more professional police force and army; develop and maintain KMNB's positive reputation; and promote a strong coalition between all parties. ISAF's centre of gravity was determined to be 'international and local' support for ISAF in Kabul. It was recognized that the forces of opposition hoped to disrupt ISAF and Afghan Transitional Administration security operations. Militarily, ISAF's objectives became to ensure security and stability, to support the Afghan Transitional Administration, and to support the establishment of durable security structures. There were four lines of operations to meet the military objectives. First, there had to be a secure environment. The key to this was the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration or DDR process. The militias had to be drawn down. Framework patrolling in the city was also crucial – ISAF had to be seen as supporting the transitional administration. Second, institutions needed to be developed, particularly the Ministry of Defence, while the police needed reorganization and equipping.

A secure loya jirga, a protected voter registration, and other election preparations were part of this line of operations. Third, the mission had to be protected, not just by passive measures but also by active measures. Fourth, the coalition needed to be strengthened so that a seamless transition to the next rotation could take place – and continuity be maintained.[18]

Photo Credit: Author

The CU-161 Sperwer unmanned aerial vehicle was initially acquired as part of the Operation ATHENA force protection package. Despite teething problems, the system redeployed to Kandahar in 2006. Callsign SKIDOO provided reliable all-weather unmanned aerial vehicle coverage until its replacement in 2009.

What fell out of all of this was that the key event for the stabilization of Afghanistan was most likely going to be the Constitutional Loya Jirga. Representatives from all aspects of Afghan society were going to craft, with UN assistance, the type of government that Afghanistan was going to have. The Constitutional Loya Jirga was Afghanistan's last best hope for peace. Numerous entities could threaten or disrupt the proceedings; therefore, ISAF had to be in a position to protect the process, not just provide on-site security during the event, but also to forestall or deter interlopers long before the event took place. NATO planners addressed this problem, but it was buried in a list of 11 common tasks and obliquely referred to as "assist the transitional authority and UNAMA in preparation and conduct of the Constitutional Loya Jirga." It was up to MGen Leslie and BGen Devlin to 'operationalize' how exactly this would be done. ISAF was outgunned on several fronts if the conventional forces made trouble. There were also several terrorist organizations. Military force was not necessarily the best tool to use against them. How best to operate on all levels simultaneously while achieving the aim?[19]

One of the obstacles that emerged was the relationship between the Canadian commanders and Commander ISAF, Lt Gen Götz Gliemeroth. For the most part, these were personality-based issues. Consequently, an informal division of labour emerged as circumstances and competencies dictated. Commander ISAF would deal with President Karzai, civilian ministers of the Afghan Transitional Administration, and the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (the head of UNAMA). DComd ISAF, MGen Leslie, would handle the senior Afghan government military leadership, both military and civilian, plus "every other local leader in Kabul that claims to be a general" as well as the non-UN heads of mission for the international community and their deputies. Commander KMNB, BGen Devlin, would focus on key power brokers that controlled events in the city itself.[20] This division of labour facilitated the reconciliation of the detailed planning done earlier in the year by the Canadian staff with the more vague approach already taken vis-à-vis their predecessors in ISAF and KMNB.

It is important to note here the existence of Operation ACCIUS. The Canadian Forces had deployed one officer with UNAMA since November 2002. UNAMA's focus was on "political affairs and institutional development and governance," specifically "relief, recovery, and reconstruction efforts." It maintained seven regional offices in the large population centres in Afghanistan. LCol Robert Jensen was the Military Liaison Officer who also provided advice where possible. The presence of a Canadian officer in UNAMA became important for coordination and information flow as the demobilization and decommissioning programmes got underway in fall 2003-spring 2004.[21]

Supporting Operation ATHENA in Kabul

The strategic logistics pipeline for Operation ATHENA was similar to the one established for Operation APOLLO. Almost everything came in by air to Kabul Afghanistan International Airport – either by AN-124 Antonov transports directly from Canadian Forces Base Trenton in Ontario, sometimes via an Intermediate Staging Base in Turkey, or by CC-150 Polaris and then CC-130 Hercules via Camp Mirage in Dubai.[22]

During Operation APOLLO, the Forward Support Group handled the incoming supplies and equipment for the deployed battle group at KAF. The situation with Operation ATHENA was vastly different for a number of reasons. First, and most importantly, the comfort level for the deployed force in Kabul was significantly raised. Whereas the Operation APOLLO forces operated in a completely austere environment, Operation ATHENA would not. That meant that Canadian bed-down and welfare facilities at Camp Julien and Camp Warehouse had to be maintained. Second, there were in effect two geographically separate facilities in Kabul that had to be able to operate independently both defensively and in terms of maintenance.

This in turn meant that the 'teeth to tail' ratio between combat arms and support personnel might diminish, which was something planners in Ottawa were determined to avoid.

Their solution was to establish a National Support Element (a composite logistics unit), and then use the Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency (CFPSA) and an entity called CANCAP (Canadian Contractor Augmentation Program) to reduce the number of logistics soldiers in the force. In the Balkans, Canadian logistics personnel saw how European and American forces relied on 'alternate service delivery' contractors to construct and maintain camps in order to save 'uniforms' for operational tasks. The first Canadian experience began in late 2000 in Bosnia Roto 7, NATO Stabilization Force. This had a negative effect of diverting money back to Canada rather than enhancing the local economy, but there were people who were determined to use CANCAP to solve a myriad of problems. As a result, SNC Lavalin won a contract to provide a CANCAP organization of some 300 personnel to support Canadian logistics activities in Kabul. The CFPSA handled welfare activities.

Based out of Camp Julien with detachments at Camp Warehouse and at ISAF Headquarters, the NSE for Operation ATHENA, commanded by LCol Chris Thurrott, had personnel drawn from logistics units throughout Canada. The NSE itself was broken down into traditional Canadian logistics functions: Maintenance, Transport, Supply, Movements, Personnel Support, Financial Services, Postal Services, and Engineering Services. Where it differed was in the relationship with the battalion group and the ISTAR Company. In the past, each unit had its own administrative company that was integral to the battalion and interfaced with the logistics battalion. In part to save money and generate efficiencies, the administrative company for 3 RCR was reduced and its functions assumed by the NSE. This change, which was implemented for the rest of the Afghanistan war, resulted in intense debate within the logistics world and between it and the combat arms over who was responsible for controlling logistics and operations. Some believed that the new process was overly centralized and reduced the flexibility of the combat forces as the battalion group, for example, had to go to another organization to maintain its vehicles. Others disagreed, arguing that the new structure avoided a duplication of effort. The jury remained out for the time being.

On the signals front, the Canadian force had the ability to handle high frequency and ultra-high frequency communications between its units, and communicate with Canadian and allied computer systems both internally and strategically. This last part is important historically as Operation ATHENA was a watershed in the size and breadth of deployed computer capability.

The KMNB Headquarters and Signals Squadron were drawn from 2 Brigade in Canada, with signalers from the Land Communications and Information Systems organizations, augmenting the Signals Squadron at ISAF HQ. The 3 RCR Battalion Group and

ISTAR Company also had their integral signalers to maintain tactical communications. For strategic communications, there was a TF Kabul National Command and Control and Information Systems troop of 40 personnel with three deployed mobile terminal detachments: Camp Julien, Camp Warehouse, and Camp Mirage. These satellite systems were the backbone of communications to Canada.

As for health services support, there was a Health Services Support Company drawn from 2 Field Ambulance that included six Bison armoured ambulances and crews, plus 10 medical aids with the infantry battalion. The main ISAF hospital remained the German facility at Camp Warehouse.

Generally, the military end of the logistics system established for Operation ATHENA in Kabul functioned well without any catastrophic incidents. The hard work put in by the maintainers, drivers, and supply techs ensured that the battalion group, ISTAR Company, and their commanders at KMNB and ISAF HQ could focus on the demanding tasks of stabilizing Kabul in the face of a deteriorating situation. CANCAP and the CFPSA were, however, much more problematic. The NSE and CANCAP were not integrated well procedurally and, at times, worked at cross-purposes. There was no central logistics command post to mate all entities. CANCAP personnel were not security-cleared (many were not even Canadian), nor were they properly trained, nor were there enough of them, and operations were delayed as a result. SNC Lavalin, for the most part, was not fully prepared to operate in a hostile environment like Kabul, but at the same time, Canadian Forces logistics planners conceded that they might have asked CANCAP to do too much. In the end, it was questionable whether CANCAP actually freed up troops for other tasks. The engineers constantly complained that they were doing the contractor's work for them. The NSE went so far as to create a "CANCAP mitigation plan" in the event the contractor pulled out – this involved identifying NSE augmentees in Canada that could be flown to Kabul in an emergency. As for the CFPSA, "the principle CFPSA manager was a retired Maj, and was unwilling to work for a Capt in the NSE…there was considerable bureaucratic status-seeking among members of the CFPSA but after this was eliminated, the service became effective."[23]

3 RCR Battalion Group Operations

It was the presence of the light Canadian battalion group based on 3 RCR that 'bought' operational influence within ISAF and NATO, which in turn allowed Canada to command in Kabul. Under the command of LCol Denne, the battalion group deployed three infantry companies: N Company mounted in Iltis jeeps into PDs 3, 5, and 14; Para Company also mounted in Iltis jeeps into PDs 6 and 7; and Charles Company, mounted in LAV IIIs into Paghman, Chahar Asiab, and the western districts. (See Figure 4-5)

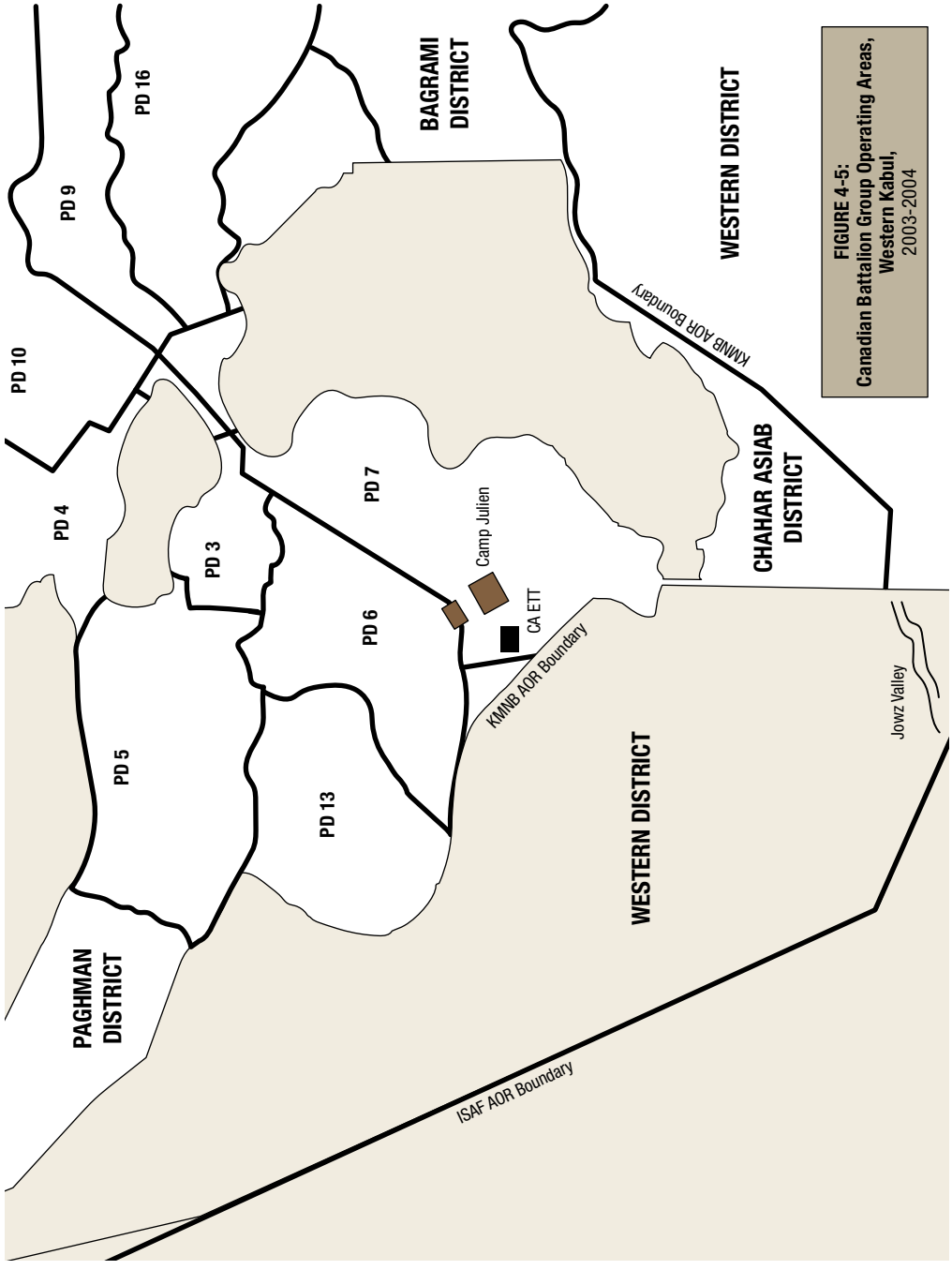


Figure 4-5: Canadian Battalion Group Operating Areas, Western Kabul, 2003-2004

Q Company, commanding a mixture of camp security, NSE and NCE troops, handled Camp Julien and the two observation posts overlooking the camp at the King's and Queen's Palaces. Combat Support Company's elements deployed as required. For example, Recce Platoon handled various covert and night observation tasks while an anti-armour direct fire support platoon, with its TOW missile-equipped Iltis vehicles, was responsible for creating an anti-armour plan for the Canadian area of operation in case the AMF tanks got loose. 24 Field Squadron was integrated into the battalion group – its tasks included defensive preparations for the camp, mine threat and infrastructure recce, EOD and IED disposal, and construction projects in support of the battalion group.[24]

Unlike the previous Canadian deployment, 3 RCR Battalion Group deployed with a dedicated CIMIC group consisting of a platoon of 28 people, whereas the Operation APOLLO battalion group had an ad hoc CIMIC section. Their tasks were to assist with force protection through interaction with the population and the provision of low-level development projects.[25] CIMIC was central to the battalion group's concept of operations, which emphasized the maintenance of a constant presence in the area of operations through day and night patrols accompanied as much as possible by Afghan police. LCol Denne and his staff understood that the key to understanding the environment was "to quickly establish and maintain close ties with the police, mayors, and Mullahs utilizing CIMIC assets as an information-gathering tool and conduit for winning hearts and minds through humanitarian-type projects." Helping the civilian police increase their professionalism was deemed crucial by 3 RCR planners.[26]

The infantry companies patrolled their areas with the police and made contact with the population; specialist surveillance troops focused their efforts on specific targets to collect information; and CIMIC connected all of their efforts to the local population's leaders. These were called "framework operations" and, for the most part, this is what the battalion group's troops did day in and day out during their tour. Then there were Directed Operations. Anything outside of framework operations had to be referred back to Ottawa to the DCDS staff for permission before execution. Anything with the potential for political backlash or anything that was potentially high-risk had to be assessed by staff that were not on the ground in Kabul. For example, if a terrorist leader came under surveillance in the Canadian area and the battalion group wanted to snatch him, the operation plan had to go back to Ottawa and the battalion group had to wait for Ottawa to concur. If Canadian troops were needed outside the designated Canadian area of operations (not necessarily the ISAF area but an area established by Ottawa planners,) a plan would have to be formulated, risk assessed, and the plan then sent to Ottawa for concurrence.[27]

Photo Credit: DND KA2003-A056D

The Canadian battalion group conducted an extensive patrolling programme in the Western districts. For the most part, these were mounted patrols using Iltis vehicles, though there was a LAV III company for more robust situations.

3 RCR had little information going into its area of operations and would be some of the first ISAF troops patrolling into the more rural districts. The terrain varied considerably. Paghman district, for example, was agricultural, as was Chahar Asiab. PD 3 was an urban area heavily damaged during years of fighting, while PD 5 was completely built-up. PD 14 was an urban-sub-urban mix. Ethnically and politically, almost all Afghan groups were represented in the Canadian area of operations. It would take time to figure out who was aligned with whom. (See Figure 4-6)

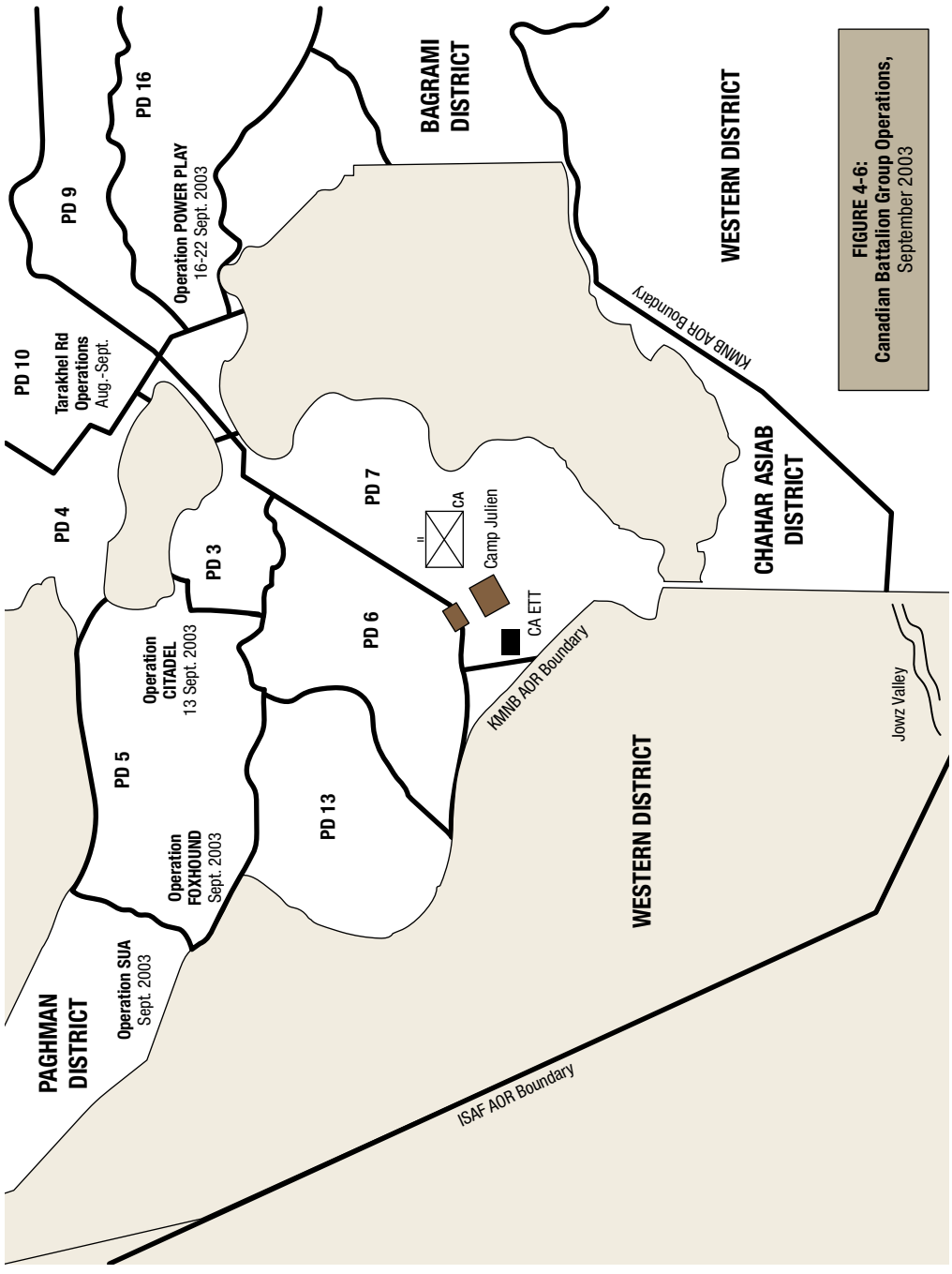


Figure 4-6: Canadian Battalion Group Operations, September 2003

The battalion group was confronted with three additional issues in late August and into September. The first involved reports through the Operation ENDURING FREEDOM chain to Canada that an Al Qaeda cell was coming into Kabul to target the transitional administration leadership, that another cell specializing in suicide bombings was about to enter the city, and that there was increased terrorist training in Logar province, which abutted the Chahar Asiab district. Camp Julien was named as a possible target.[28] As 3 RCR patrols pushed out, they heard from locals that defeated Taliban leaders were actively recruiting in three of the districts west of Kabul. Canadian Human Intelligence teams deployed with the patrols and confirmed that the situation was changing.[29] The battalion group activated Operation WOLVERINE, which took some of the patrol resources from the PDs plus Recce Platoon and allocated them to the southwest part of western districts in an overt fashion to demonstrate presence and collect more information.[30]

The second issue was the evolving situation in PD 5 and Paghman district. PD 5 was a predominantly Pashtun district (60%) which was aligned with Abdul Rab Rassoul Sayyaf, who maintained residences there. The Sayyaf faction went back to the Jihad days of the 1980s. Sayyaf's forces joined the Northern Alliance against the Taliban even though his movement drew support from Saudi Arabia and was Wahhabist in orientation. Paghman district and PD 5 housed most of Sayyaf's AMF formations (1st Division and 10th Division) totaling some 6000 troops equipped with tanks and BMPs. Other Sayyaf-associated formations were based in PDs 6 and 7 near Camp Julien. The Sayyaf faction, it emerged, was conducting joint patrols with the police and further investigation determined that the police were co-opted by Sayyaf's AMF in Paghman district as well. This was potentially destabilizing since the allegiance of the police had to be with the government and not a factional leader so that legitimacy could be maintained. In effect, this was an overt move for parallel power in two districts. It also emerged that the crime increase noted in PD 5 was somehow associated with this power structure and that the police and Sayyaf's militia were involved; local *maliks* asked that Canadian patrols stay away from meetings. Operation CITADEL had an anti-armour platoon and human intelligence teams develop information on the situation, in preparation for a surge operation into PD 5. The patrolling surge took place on 13 September 2003 and crime dropped off temporarily.[31]

Photo Credit: DND KA2003-A149D

Photo Credit: DND KA2003-A272D

Foot and mobile patrols were pushed out into the western districts of Kabul, which included rural areas that were adjacent to more problematic provinces like Laghman to the south and Wardak to the west. Laghman had Taliban sympathizers, while Wardak was HiG territory.

The third issue involved Canadian CIMIC reporting the existence of a refugee camp in PD 7. CIMIC reported that this camp was on land owned by a local businessman who wanted the camp dismantled. The refugees claimed that they had permission from the Ministry of the Interior to occupy the land temporarily. Depending on who was connected to whom, minor land disputes like this could escalate into a larger problem that might draw in other power brokers. Para Company was tasked to keep an eye on developments along with CIMIC: This was called Operation RAPTOR.[32]

In all three cases, 3 RCR Battalion Group had to remain vigilant and look for opportunities to disrupt those trying to aggravate these situations while maintaining a presence throughout the Canadian area of operations.

Kabul Multinational Brigade and ISTAR Company Operations

3 RCR Battalion Group also had assistance from KMNB resources, including the Canadian ISTAR Company. KMNB maintained an ISTAR Coordination Centre that applied packages of surveillance systems to priority areas established by the commander: sensors like LUNA unmanned aerial vehicles, Coyotes with their mast systems, and electronic warfare systems, or collectors like recce, forward observation officers, and human intelligence teams. There were three types of tasks: standing tasks (analogous to framework

operations); directed tasks; and opportunistic tasks. ISTAR Company used a police analogy to explain its *modus operandi*. A snitch tip might lead to a phone tap, which in turn would produce a stakeout. The stakeout would lead to link analysis of all the persons involved, which would then result in a takedown. The police or the National Directorate of Security might do the takedown with conventional forces backing them up, or special operations forces might undertake a direct action mission.

In an environment like Kabul, the challenge for ISTAR teams was to be able to deploy and stay in a location while remaining undetected from the general population as well as the target. Deception and camouflage were skills in high demand as factional leaders and anti-government elements closely observed ISAF movements. A company-level operation might be mounted with a collection team embedded in it focused on a different objective, or Canadian soldiers from a broken-down vehicle awaiting recovery might decide to 'sightsee' with their digital cameras, for example.

As a brigade resource, ISTAR Company ranged all over the ISAF area of operations. Problems emerged in PD 10, the district surrounding Kabul Afghanistan International Airport, which ISTAR focused on in late August and early September. Information suggested that there was a terrorist cell operating in the village of Tarakhel, which was located northeast of the Kabul Airport runway. The French battalion did not patrol in that area, so there was limited information on the layout, social organization or anti-government presence. Once ISTAR Company applied its resources to the village, BGen Devlin convinced the French to conduct joint patrols with Canadian Coyote recce patrols. This led to the collection of more information, which pointed to people who were involved in the car bombing of a German military bus, that killed six and wounded 30 in June 2003. A major National Directorate of Security raid eventually mounted on Tarakhel netted 28 detainees, some of whom were involved in the attack.[33]

PD 10 also hosted a number of AMF compounds, including the National Guard Brigade (800 troops), two independent infantry regiments, and two air defence regiments. One of these regiments was operating an SA-13 Gopher self-propelled anti-aircraft missile system and was "painting" ISAF and commercial aircraft with its radar as they were taking off and landing at Kabul International Airport which resulted in the firing of numerous flares, the dropping of much chaff, and many strained backs as aircraft radically manoeuvred to get away from what their systems said was an air defence threat. Another unit had a relationship to a refugee camp in the area and there was some concern about criminal activity around fuel sales and the improper re-allocation of humanitarian aid. Surveillance resources from ISTAR Company were applied which led in both cases to other agencies resolving both problems before they could escalate to violence and generate spillover effects elsewhere.[34]

There was still something wrong in PD 10, however. On the night of 11 September 2003, rockets hit ISAF facilities in a coordinated but ineffective attack. Camp Warehouse was hit with two rockets, while Kabul International Airport reported two explosions to the northeast and west of the airport. Another rocket landed in PD 10, and another explosion was reported near the airport. Another rocket, this one unexploded, was discovered in the morning in PD 10. German patrols surged into Bagrami district south of Camp Warehouse to investigate yet another report of an explosion, while all other battalions surged into their areas of operations. None of the ARTHUR radars detected the attacks, which greatly concerned KMNB HQ. There was no adequate explanation found. It was some form of message from an entity unhappy with ISAF activities, but the content was unclear.[35]

The ARTHUR situation became problematic throughout the fall. The systems were acquired because some believed that their presence provided a deterrent to factional indirect fire; this was seen in Sarajevo back in 1995. In Kabul, however, rocket attacks were singular, opportunistic "shoot and scoot" – they did not involve multiple rocket launchers or tube artillery, so there was nothing for the Canadian light guns to fire back at – if the AMF had deployed artillery against ISAF, the combination of the light guns and ARTHUR would have proved useful. To what extent the system deterred AMF artillery use is unclear. The restrictions on the use of ARTHUR were extreme – to save money, each radar was permitted to emit for 1 500 hours every 18 months. In other words, the radars could only be used during "peak periods" of potential attack. The systems were incredibly accurate at determining point of origin and, unlike other systems, they could detect rockets, but if they weren't on, then a response was next to impossible.[36]

As the situation in PD 5 heated up, ISTAR Company shifted its resources to watch the Sayyaf faction. Coyotes, LUNAs, and electronic warfare assets reported on criminal activity in PD 14 that apparently was linked with similar activity in PD 5. Operation SUA, designed to observe the two Sayyaf residential compounds, was activated. Much of this activity led to preparations for Operation FOXHOUND, a planned 3 RCR Battalion Group surge into PD 5 and Paghman districts. FOXHOUND, however, was delayed because of an even larger problem that was brewing: there were indicators that a coup d'état was in the making.

Operation POWER PLAY: 16-22 September 2003

In mid-September 2003, refugees returning to their homes in Kabul were blocked by Tajik AMF troops from re-occupying their residences. After several increasingly violent encounters, a number of refugees were shot and killed. On investigation, ISAF discovered that the culprits belonged to Fahim Khan, who was simultaneously the Minister of Defence in the Afghan Transitional Administration and the leader of the Tajik forces in the Northern Alliance. Housing and other properties vacated during the fighting in PD 10 now had been

claimed commercially by Fahim Khan – and the houses bulldozed. The land was then given to several transitional administration cabinet ministers: Pashtun, Hazara, as well as Tajik. UN Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi brought this to President Karzai's attention. Karzai then issued instructions to his cabinet ministers that such activities were prohibited, and that there would be an investigation, which annoyed Fahim Khan.[37] Subsequently, Fahim Khan approached the American ambassador and told him that Karzai was weak, that he was not asserting enough control in the outlying provinces, that violence was increasing against the government, and he should replace Karzai. Fahim Khan intimated that other power brokers felt the same way he did. Karzai was about to travel overseas for discussions with the international community. Fahim Khan noted that he could take over bloodlessly while Karzai was away. The American ambassador attempted to discourage him from this course of action.[38]

The Americans apparently did not convey this information to ISAF. Two Afghan cabinet ministers, Minister of Finance Ashraf Ghani and Minister of the Interior Jalali, approached Commander ISAF and Commander CJTF-180 with concerns for President Karzai's safety.[39] At the same time, ISAF's intelligence resources, including informants and radio intercepts, picked up the Fahim Khan AMF preliminary moves: these indicated that the target was the Presidential Palace.[40] ISAF HQ summoned BGen Devlin at 2000 hours 16 September 2003, where he met with the Commander ISAF and MGen Leslie.

"There is an imminent threat of a coup against President Karzai," Leslie told him.

"Do you have a formal Warning Order for me?" BGen Devlin asked.

"There's no time. Peter, we have to stop it right now."

And with that, Commander KMNB departed for Camp Warehouse; the G3 was waiting, and commander and staff immediately drafted a warning order and outline plan called POWER PLAY by 2300 hours.[41] POWER PLAY was deemed, for public consumption, to be an exercise. Troops were told they were rehearsing a contingency operation plan, but the real reasons for all of the activity were kept close hold to prevent the excitable and wide-eyed Canadian media from divulging what was going on.[42]

The ISTAR Coordination Centre contacted Maj Dyrald Cross, who was out on patrol with the Coyotes. Recce Squadron was ordered to deploy and observe three militia compounds. The reasons were not passed over the net. The Coyote crews moved within sensor and gun range of the three Tajik militia compounds and were established before midnight. As the sensors swept back and forth and the crews counted T-55 tanks, BMPs

and multiple-rocket launch vehicles, orders came down from BGen Devlin: if there was movement in any of the compounds, report it. If the movement consisted of more than a company group in size, the Coyotes were authorized to open up with 25mm fire and coaxial machine-gun fire, withdraw, and then report to the nearest ISAF base.[43]

Photo Credit: DND KA2004-R103-1272d

On two occasions, the Canadian ISAF contingent prepared to deploy forces to deter a coup d'état by Afghan militia forces. In the first instance, MGen Leslie and BGen Devlin prepared Operation POWER PLAY to offset Fahim Khan's Tajik militia forces. This involved overt preparations and covert surveillance operations.

Battle procedure continued all night. Anti-tank capabilities, particularly the TOW launchers from 3 RCR Battalion Group, were suddenly in demand as a counter to the armoured and mechanized militia forces, as were F Battery's 105mm LG-1 light guns. The Germans brought out their TOW Wiesel vehicles, and the French unveiled an undeclared anti-tank missile system. KMNB HQ activated its intelligence liaison with CJTF-180 and information started to flow in both directions.[44]

The potential enemy forces in this operation included Lt Gen Bismillah Khan's Kabul Garrison's 717th Infantry Regiment and the 637th Tank Battalion with its 17 T-55 tanks and BMPs, which were both located downtown. These units were assessed to be the coup spearhead against the Palace. The National Guard Brigade, with its 10 T-55s and two T-62s were assessed as possible allies in the coup; their role would be to block KMNB units moving into the city from Camp Warehouse. There was also the 21st Infantry Regiment with its 400 personnel at Massoud Square in the heart of the city. These were all Tajik units. The air defence units near Kabul Airport were assessed as neutral.[45] (See Figure 4-7)

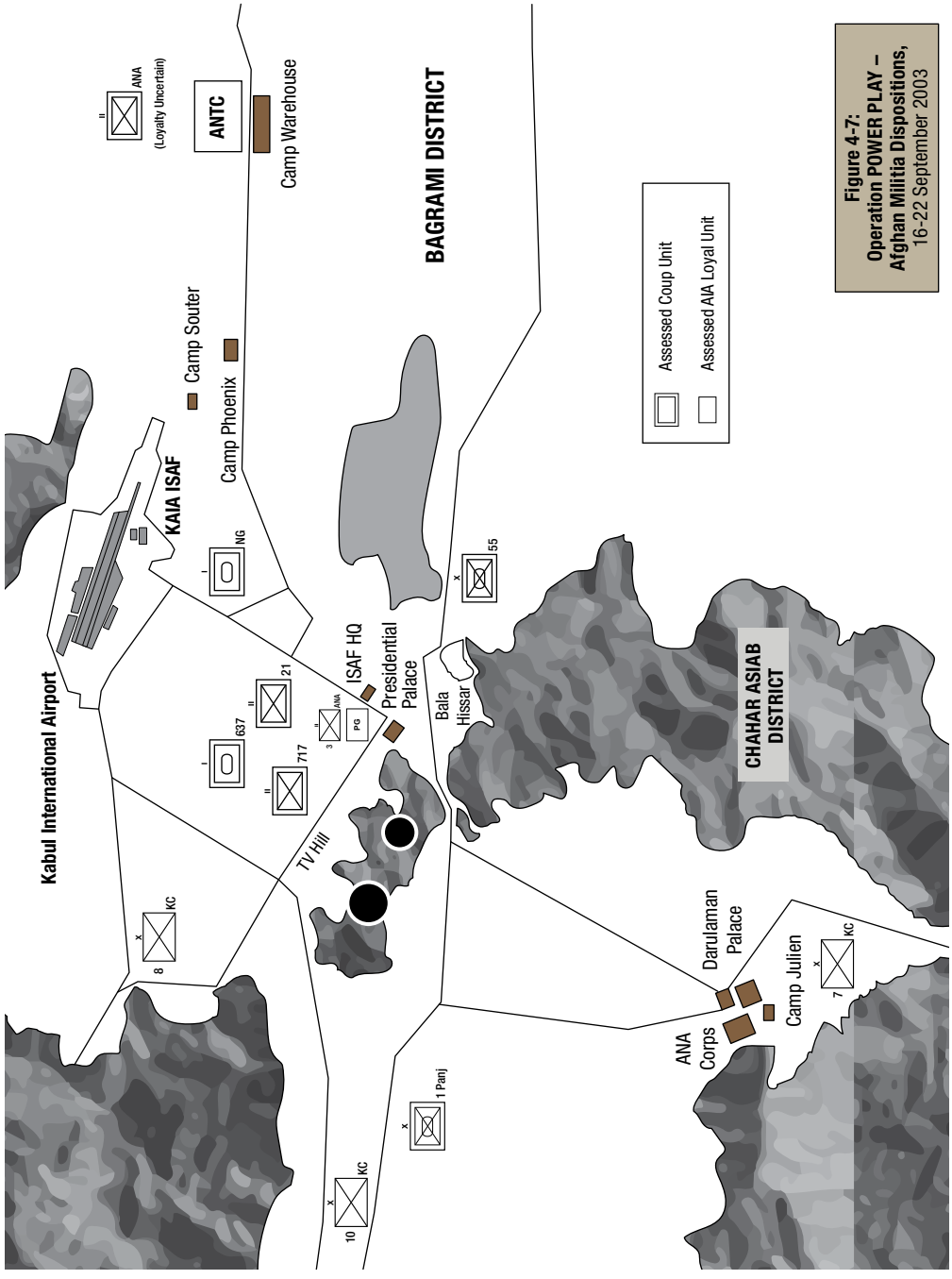


Figure 4-7: Operation POWER PLAY – Afghan Militia Dispositions, 16-22 September 2003

The Bala Hissar Fortress, containing the 55th Infantry Division (nine T-55 tanks, a battalion of D-30 guns, and 3 000 personnel,) was believed to be the outer cordon of the spearhead. The 1st Panjshir Division in PD 5, (six T-55s and 3 000 personnel) was mostly Tajik and was assessed to be a blocking force to stop Camp Julien forces from deploying. 16th Tank Brigade (12 T-55s) and 761st Anti-Tank Regiment (12 jeep-mounted Milan missile systems) were Tajik-dominated and were possibly going to be used to block American forces coming in from Bagram.[46]

As for friendly forces, there was KMNB; the Ministry of the Interior under Jalali would support the President – he controlled the police QRF, but the local police would probably stay neutral (the National Directorate of Security would most likely side with the coup d'état as it was dominated by Tajiks). The presidential guard was 3rd Battalion, Afghan National Army, and assessed as loyal, while the Afghan army units training at Pol-e-Charki would most likely side with the transitional administration. The problem was that General Zemeray, the commander of the Afghan Army Brigade, was "a former protégé of the enemy faction." The Pashtun militia units (Kabul Corps under Sher Alam Ibrahimi) were assessed as loyal to the transitional administration. It was not clear to the KMNB planners what CJTF-180 would do.[47] Karzai's American security detail had good relations with Canadian Special Operations Forces (CANSOF) elements and would only communicate with the Canadians. They did not trust anybody else.[48]

The other part of the plan was to mobilize all three KMNB battalions, and then move the Canadian LAV III company and the bulk of the other two Canadian companies down to ISAF HQ under cover of darkness.[49] This QRF would be prepared, on order, to establish a ring of steel around the Presidential Palace. Para, November, and Charles companies, scrambling to meet the timing, deployed in small groups from west Kabul through the passes to the large ISAF HQ compound where they were in place by 0600 hours on 17 September.[50]

If push came to shove, the French battalion would hold Kabul Airport, while the German battalion and the rest of 3 RCR would cover the approaches to the Presidential Palace: the Germans to the northeast in PD 1, and the Canadians and the British company to the southeast and the palace itself. The Canadian light guns would cover everything.[51] (See Figure 4-8)

MGen Leslie, meanwhile, contacted his American counterparts and discovered that there was a plan to have U.S. Air Force aircraft, including a B-1 bomber, and a U.S. Army AH-64 attack helicopter unit, conduct an aerial show of force. The helicopters swarmed around the city in the night and sonic booms were heard everywhere. When dawn came, MGen Leslie invited General Bari Ali, Fahim Khan's second-in-command, over to ISAF HQ for a cup of tea. MGen Leslie made sure, on their way to the coffee shop, that General Ali saw LAV IIIs

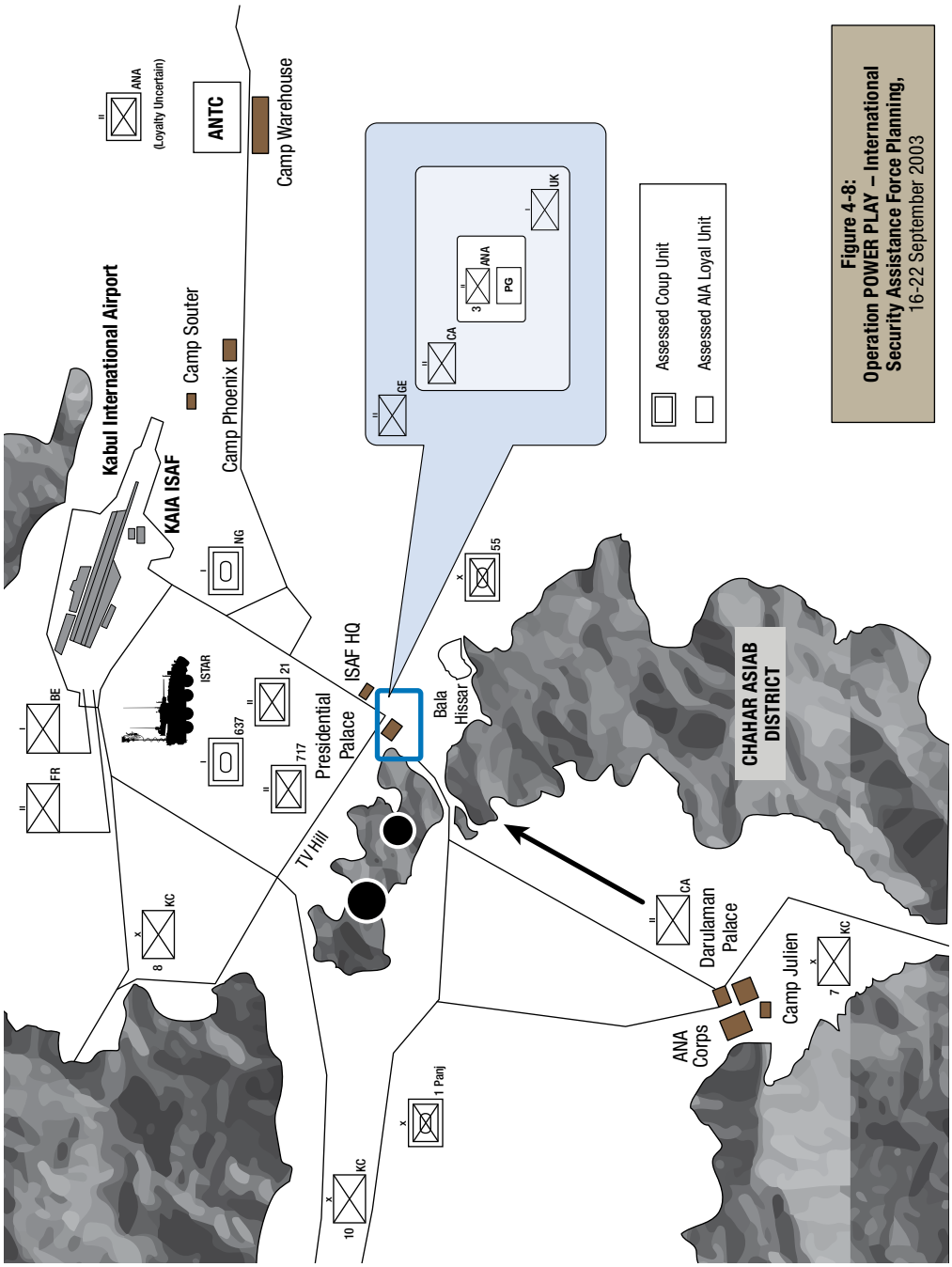


Figure 4-8: Operation POWER PLAY – International Security Assistance Force Planning, 16-22 September 2003

and Coyotes lined up, ammunition being laid out, soldiers going through battle procedure, and bayonets being sharpened. Not a word was said. "It was made very clear that this would be a very expensive endeavour," MGen Leslie noted in retrospect.[52]

There were now seven AMF compounds under observation by ISTAR Company resources. The German LUNA unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) were constantly overhead while the Canadian and German electronic warfare teams maintained a high alert level. Canadian forward observation officer parties identified targets within the compounds so they could be shelled by the guns if required. Particular attention was directed at the 55th Infantry Division and the 717th Infantry Regiment based in PD 1, located right downtown.[53] Tajik tanks that were starting to move around in their compounds suddenly stopped and returned to their parking positions. There was no further movement.

Operation POWER PLAY remained in place for the next nine days and then was stood down on 21 September 2003. The coup was thwarted without a shot being fired and with no loss of life. The Afghan Transitional Administration was saved and another civil war averted – for the time being. The Kabul Chief of Police was sacked because of his role in the land grab, while Karzai looked more carefully and with greater interest at what was euphemistically called "Ministry of Defence reform."

Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration; Heavy Weapons Cantonment; and ISAF Expansion

Next to Constitutional Loya Jirga security operations, the most critical project Canadian soldiers were involved in during 2003 was the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration programme, which was designed to demobilize the AMF that swore allegiance to the various power brokers. It not only played a pivotal role in the short-term stability of Kabul, but also had strategic implications in the rest of the country. Additionally, the vortices that spun from the process influenced Canada's future roles, missions and operations in Afghanistan for the next decade. Consequently, the complexity of DDR and its relationships requires some detailed discussion here because of how intertwined it became with several other problems.

The idea of a DDR process as part of the endgame for a war was not a new one. In Bosnia, removal of heavy weapons from Sarajevo in 1995 was considered a precursor for the Dayton peace process. Cantonment of heavy weapons, that is, their grouping in depots under guard by the international community, and the demobilization of the armies throughout Bosnia was implemented by the NATO-led Implementation Force in 1996 and enforced by the subsequent NATO-led Stabilization Force after 1997. A further refinement of these stabilization processes was developed in Kosovo: this was the concept of a 'military technical agreement' whereby belligerent forces formally agreed to disarmament, demobilization, and

reintegration in a phased fashion while under observation by the international stabilization force. A similar programme was established for Northern Ireland. Almost all of the ISAF leadership and most of the soldiers had some Balkans experience with these processes and understood their importance, particularly the Canadian officers.

The Bonn Agreement in 2001 provided for a military technical agreement in Kabul, but it was not enforced by the international community. The Bonn Agreement was not a peace treaty – it was an agreement between power brokers to stabilize and rebuild the country under a new government. ISAF was not a peacekeeping force; it existed to support the Afghan Transitional Administration. Technically, the Northern Alliance and the transitional administration were still in conflict with the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The means to enforce a military technical agreement simply did not exist in 2002 or in 2003. That said, President Karzai fully supported DDR and made it a presidential decree in January 2003 that the Ministry of Defence and the UN decommission the Afghan militia formations and units. The United Nations Development Programme for Afghanistan, as administered by UNAMA, included DDR as one of its programmes and was responsible for funding and implementing it in partnership with the Afghan Transitional Administration. The mechanism for this was through the Afghan New Beginnings Programme, established in April 2003. Japan provided funding and was also supposed to provide leadership, but by August 2003 a combination of an inept UN military advisory staff in Kabul combined with "the bureaucratic games played by Japan to avoid any responsibility of actually doing something that requires work or assuming any element of risk" produced high levels of frustration at ISAF and CJTF-180. The Japanese contended that they would not release monies for the project until the Ministry of Defence had been reformed. Nothing had been accomplished at all.[54]

As we have seen, MGen Leslie and his staff had already formulated a campaign plan for ISAF, which specifically included DDR as a crucial element to success. In mid-August 2003, MGen Leslie met with the British ambassador and Commander CJTF-180 in order to jump-start the DDR process. All participants recognized that disarming the militias was central to building up the legitimacy of the Afghan Transitional Administration in Kabul, but all could see that the process would eventually have to expand throughout Afghanistan. MGen Leslie headed the military aspects of implementation, drawing on Canadian campaign planning that had already taken place earlier in the year.

It was evident to Leslie and the Canadian planners that anything that could be done to reduce or remove any parallel power would improve the probability of survival for the transitional administration. The American forces and the Canadians in ISAF established informal working relationships while keeping UNAMA and the Japanese as titular heads of the DDR programme.[55]

Crucial to the success of this endeavour was the need to build relationships not only between the Afghans but also between the members of the international community when it became clear that the UN was incapable of operationalizing DDR and the heavy weapons cantonment processes. At that time Canadian ambassador Chris Alexander played a significant role, working in partnership with MGen Leslie. The ability to get relevant members of the international community around one table and the Afghan Ministry of Defence around another, to garner the necessary resources and then provide linkage between the two groups to get movement on DDR was a significant achievement for both men, especially in the Kabul environment in 2003.

It is critical to note here that MGen Leslie, let alone Chris Alexander, would not have been able to wield this level of influence without the presence of 3 RCR Battalion Group, ISTAR Company, Canadian command of KMNB and the ability to provide logistic support for those forces. The synergy brought to bear by the Canadian units, not only by their presence in Kabul but by their demonstrable high level of professionalism and effectiveness, was the basis of this influence, not the mere presence of an embassy and the ability to dispense development aid monies through third-party intermediaries.

The DDR process was seen as a countrywide programme, but MGen Leslie and the Canadian planners realized early on that the consensual removal of heavy weapons from the capital was almost a separate problem from DDR. It was necessary for two reasons. First, a legitimate government had to be established as much as possible outside the coercive shadow of the militias still in Kabul through the upcoming Constitutional Loya Jirga. Second, once the transitional administration's legitimacy was demonstrably established in Kabul, not just on paper, the decommissioning of militia armies outside Kabul would in theory be progressively easier, particularly if it were accompanied by a strong information campaign. Recognizing the synergy between these two reasons, the issue was operationalization. The UN did not have the resources to identify and canton heavy weapons anywhere, let alone the capital. DDR's focus was on the militia soldiers themselves, not their equipment – after each formation and unit registered their personnel with the Afghan New Beginnings Programme, they were to be essentially paid off, given a certificate of good service, and sent home.

Photo Credit: Author

Photo Credit: Author

Photo Credit: DND KA2004-A012D

Photo Credit: DND KA2004-A010D

The various Northern Alliance factions were equipped with tanks, infantry combat vehicles, air defence systems, and rocket and tubed artillery. Heavy weapons cantonment operations mounted by ISAF played a crucial role in reducing the ability of the AMF to coerce the Afghan political process.

Then there were the power brokers. How would they react to having their tanks, multiple rocket launchers, and anti-aircraft missiles taken away from them? In this part of the world, the possession of such items, regardless of their operational status, related to prestige as much as effectiveness. An Afghan commander may have 12 tanks, of which five were 'runners,' but for his 'audience' he had 12 tanks, while his rival might have seven. The Ministry of Defence, with its singular Afghan National Army Brigade, could not coerce the militia formations. Ostensibly, the militia formations reported to the Ministry of Defence, but everyone knew the Tajik-heavy Ministry of Defence had 'special relationships' with the Tajik militias. Karzai's constant pressure on Ministry of Defence reform made them all nervous. This is why the project required a high level of finesse. Any slip and the city could plunge into the abyss of another civil war.

In effect, ISAF ran the heavy weapons cantonment programme, not the UN. Although cantonment started as a separate programme, it became intertwined with DDR. ISAF HQ identified and established three cantonment sites. Site 1 was at the Pol-e Charkhi training base across the road from KMNB HQ. Site 2 was in Chahar Asiab, and Site 3 was in Paghman, both of which were in the Canadian area of operations. (See Figure 4-9)

KMNB units and Afghan Army units had to identify and approach the AMF formations in units in their area and conduct surveys of their weapons stocks. Then each commander had to be approached via his chain of command, if it could be identified, through the Ministry of Defence, be briefed on what was happening, and establish an inventory and a transport schedule. Heavy-lift vehicles and tank transporters would then remove the heavy weapons to the cantonment sites, where in theory the Ministry of Defence would figure out what could be repaired and reused and what should be scrapped.[56] It was, in the words of MGen Leslie, "endless teas and dinners, almost shaming them into…holding parades where you would count your soldiers and get their names. Once you've got their names, and you've determined they are outside of the proscribed force levels of the Afghan Army, then you go back in a week or two and say: 'Right, hand in your weapons. We're holding a disarmament parade.'"[57]

Heavy weapons cantonment placed a significant burden on ISAF. Every time a militia unit was decommissioned, there was a requirement for tank transporters (hired, borrowed, or liberated), substantial amounts of diesel fuel to propel them, an armed escort for the convoy, recovery assets in case anything broke down, public affairs support, and even drivers when required. The Canadian NSE for both of the early Operation ATHENA rotations provided significant support to the heavy weapons cantonment process with their resources.

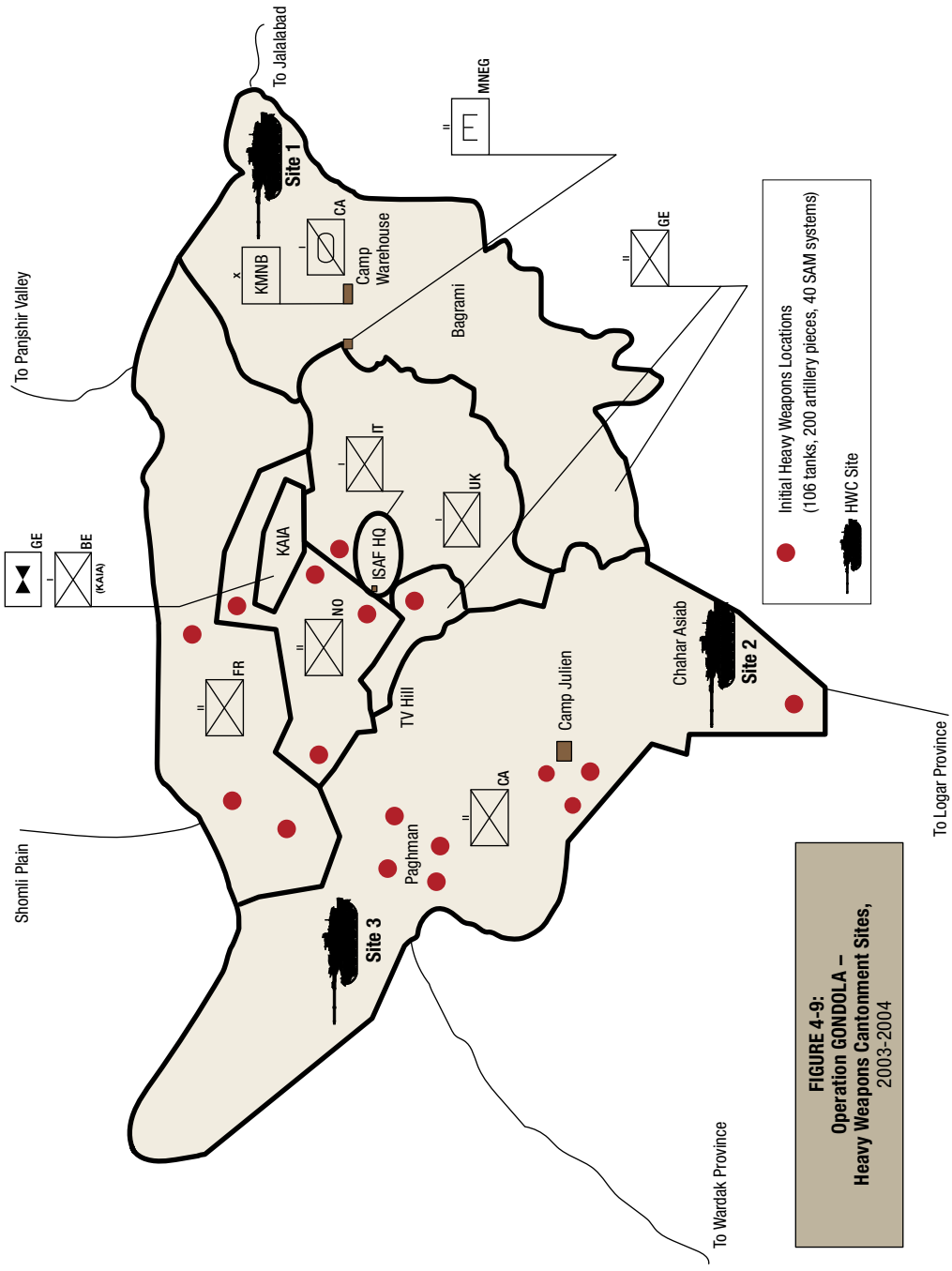


FIGURE 4-9:
Operation GONDOLA – Heavy Weapons Cantonment Sites, 2003-2004

Figure 4-9: Operation GONDOLA – Heavy Weapons Cantonment Sites, 2003-2004

The heavy weapons cantonment schedule was ambitious – too ambitious, as it turned out as the process dragged into 2004. There was no way that all of the heavy weapons in Kabul would be cantoned before the Constitutional Loya Jirga. However, a perceptible psychological momentum followed from the cantonment initiative in the run-up to the loya jirga. If necessary, the discreet eye of ISTAR Company could linger in that direction while the role of the Afghan National Army in event security could be boosted in the public eye through the provision of some clean BMP vehicles, snappy uniforms, and disproportionate media attention directed at them. Enough of the weapons were cantoned to create the impression of increasing stability over the short term – and that was enough to stabilize the situation so that the Constitutional Loya Jirga could take place.

At the same time, the DDR process intersected with other processes: the future expansion of ISAF, the role of PRTs and DDR activities in the provinces. The idea of having two separate international coalitions for Afghanistan was making less and less sense as many players wanted ISAF to expand outside Kabul, yet there were substantial obstacles in every direction to some form of merger between ISAF and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM organizations. Broadly put, many European NATO members didn't want to be involved in United States-led 'counterinsurgency' and preferred to be part of a 'stabilization' force, even though both were authorized by UN mandate. Many European governments were minority governments and did not think they could survive politically if they were publicly involved in a "war" where there was "killing." Calling it something else and distancing that mission from "killing" was paramount to them. A secondary French-led aspect related to European opposition to the Anglo-American action against the Hussein regime in Iraq. Being part of a United States-led coalition in Afghanistan while refusing to join one in Iraq would have been a bit too mind-bending for some.[58]

The Americans did not want the 'counterterrorism' part of the operation, specifically the part charged with hunting Al Qaeda high-value leadership targets, subject to interference from certain European NATO members, specifically the French. This related to the belief in many quarters that the French had compromised American special operations in Bosnia hunting war criminals and leaked air tasking order information to the Belgrade government during Operation ALLIED FORCE in 1999.[59]

The impetus for NATO ISAF expansion came from several azimuths. President Hamid Karzai and Lakhdar Brahimi were two advocates. A third was Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. U.S. State Department personnel, including the American ambassador, opposed expansion and were shuffled out of the way, as was the leadership inside CJTF-180 who agreed with them. Indeed, there was a growing belief in many quarters that "the ATA under President Karzai may not survive, politically or physically, unless ISAF expands across the entirety of Afghanistan"[60] The European Commission leadership in Kabul also favoured expansion.

And several international aid organizations didn't want to work with the American-led Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and wanted ISAF to handle security. Many of these organizations stubbornly believed ISAF to be some form of UN peacekeeping force that they could morally align with so they could carry out their supposedly 'neutral' work.[61]

Designed by the American commands in Afghanistan toward the end of 2002, the PRTs became part of this debate; their role was to extend the authority of the transitional administration to the provinces by providing a basic liaison, coordination, assessment, and communication capability. In the areas where the Taliban and its allies were operating, these teams also had a targeting function for special operations and air strikes. Unfortunately, there were manning issues coupled with Rumsfeld's desire to have ISAF expand, and the Americans were looking at allies to take control of some of the teams. During this time, the concept of PRTs was in flux – some now saw them as a focal point for reconstruction aid delivery in addition to the existing functions. In the midst of trying to figure out what they would be used for and how, and who would command them, the idea that PRTs could play a role in disarmament and demobilization also emerged.

Parenthetically, PRTs were viewed by some NATO ISAF members, (particularly Germany but later Canada as well) as part of an 'exit strategy' to get their forces out of Kabul, which led to German-CJTF-180 bi-lateral discussions over taking the Konduz PRT. The idea that the Konduz team could assist with disarmament and demobilization had been raised by the Americans around this time, so it is difficult to see which came first: the chicken or the egg.

The question remained: who would command the PRTs? ISAF? Operation ENDURING FREEDOM? A merged ISAF/OEF command? There was no easy or quick answer, as all of the national factors discussed earlier were in play. There were many who wanted to expand ISAF, but were interested in committing some other nations' forces to do it rather than their own. Matters came to a head in October 2003 when ISAF informed NATO that ISAF could not expand outside Kabul if NATO could not find enough forces to rotate command of Kabul airport. As well, there was the need to get a UN Security Council mandate change for ISAF before anyone could even seriously consider expansion. This was achieved fairly rapidly by mid-October in NATO circles and then at the UN Security Council after the Chinese threw their weight behind it. On 13 October 2003, the Security Council voted unanimously to expand the ISAF mission beyond Kabul in Resolution 1510. But no one wanted to commit forces – other than the Germans to Konduz.[62]

There was a certain irony when U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld bestowed praise on ISAF during a visit and declared that a NATO-led ISAF was "exactly right" for Afghanistan. ISAF's approach in Kabul was heavily influenced by NATO's involvement with the UN Protection Force, the Implementation and Stabilization Forces, the Kosovo Force and Macedonian operations, experience that Rumsfeld so derided early in his tenure as

Secretary of Defense.[63] At the same time, his derision regarding "old Europe" was justified given the immense effort expended on quibbling over the minutiae and sensitivities related to ISAF expansion. The European nations, with millions of people (over one million in uniform) and trillions of dollars, could not raise 500 personnel to run Kabul Afghanistan International Airport. In addition, the UN, with all of its experience in peacekeeping and disarmament, could not run a disarmament and reintegration programme. How could both institutions handle a protracted terrorist campaign directed at them designed to interfere with their stabilization activities?

Terrorism and Improvised Explosive Devices

Terrorism in Kabul was not new when the Canadian-led KMNB arrived in August 2003. There had been rocket attacks and mine strikes directed against ISAF since its inception. The first IED attack against ISAF occurred in September 2002, but the devices became more sophisticated by March 2003 when the first remote control device was discovered. By May 2003, command wire devices were in use in Kabul. The first vehicle-borne IEDs were employed in September 2002 and then in June 2003 with spectacular results against a German convoy.[64] The number of IED attacks was relatively small compared to the Canadian experience in southern Afghanistan after 2005, but the use of these devices was somewhat novel for Canadian troops and commanders (let alone Canadian media and the politicians).[65]

The question was: who was doing it and why? There were plenty of munitions lying around the city and environs, and plenty of citizens suffering from various forms of mental disorders or the need to get revenge. If no organization took credit for an attack, it was difficult to conclude that such attack was "messaging" to ISAF or the international community on behalf of aggrieved groups or leaders.

Canadian forces operating in Kabul had to contend with several organizations seeking the disruption of the transitional authority, some of which were anti-Taliban, some of which were pro-Taliban. There were Taliban remnants and sympathizers in the city, but the Taliban insurgency was in its infancy in the fall of 2003. Indeed, Mullah Omar convened his first shuras in mid- to late-2003 – one in Peshawar, Pakistan, and the other in Quetta, Pakistan. The Quetta Shura would eventually become the command structure for the insurgency that Canada would confront from 2005 to 2011 in the south, while the Peshawar Shura was one of a number of antagonists in Kabul and the surrounding provinces.

Throughout early September 2003, the Canadian All Source Intelligence Centre (ASIC) and ISTAR Company received nearly daily reports of Taliban-associated activity. These tended to emanate from the Chahar Asiab district and Logar province, with repeated warnings of vehicle-borne IED deployment. There were also reports that Anwar Dangar,

formerly a commander in the Northern Alliance associated with Fahim Khan who defected to the Taliban and was among the top Taliban "Most Wanted," was recruiting for the Taliban cause in western Kabul.[66]

The more prominent terrorist threat to ISAF at this time was, however, not the Taliban per se but the fundamentalist HiG organization led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. HiG was one of the original anti-communist jihad groups from the 1980s favoured by the Pakistani security services. HiG was responsible for instigating much of the violence in Kabul in 1992-1993 when Gulbuddin Hekmatyar was excluded from the power-sharing arrangements put in place after the defeat of the Najibullah regime. He sided with the Taliban after 1996 and became an antagonist of the Northern Alliance, particularly of Ahmed Shah Massoud, his Mujahideen rival from the 1980s. Even though HiG tended to be Pashtun in ethnicity, it had many supporters in Maidan Shar in Wardak province, and to the south in Logar province.

HiG was thought to be responsible for most of the terrorist activity against ISAF in late 2002 and throughout 2003. Consequently, it attracted a lot of attention from a variety of specialized Afghan-based counterterrorist forces, ISAF and non-ISAF, particularly after the German bus bombing in June. Consequently, Afghan security forces, with ISAF and other coalition elements in support, were able to take down a number of primary HiG cell leaders in Kabul on 19 August, 31 August and 26 September 2003. They narrowly missed the attack planner, an individual named Mamor Malang.[67] The 31 August takedown was significant in that it bagged a HiG commander named Mohammad Qalamuddin ("Qalam"), who had been a HiG commander in Sarobi district back in the 1980s. Canadian ISTAR Company resources acquired Qalam and tracked him, the British infantry company set up a cordon, and the National Directorate of Security arrested him and three associates. Explosive-making material and weapons were found with Qalam.[68]

Hekmatyar, an extremely ruthless but politically astute individual, desperately wanted to become the player he once thought he was on the Afghan political scene. He would ally with anybody that would feed these ambitions. HiG had representatives with Mullah Omar's Peshawar Shura and maintained supply, recruiting, and training facilities in north-west Pakistan. Some believed him to be a Pakistani security services asset sent in to stir the pot in Kabul and interfere with the Afghan Transitional Administration stabilization process. In reality, as the Taliban sidelined HiG as the main Pakistani asset, this likely stimulated Hekmatyar to prove himself and save face.[69] On one occasion, one of their bomb makers blew himself up while preparing a device that was supposed to kill President Karzai, and there were other suspected misfires. By the end of September 2003, reports made their way to ISAF that Mullah Omar was frustrated with HiG's ineffectiveness and had had a confrontation with Hekmatyar in order to motivate him.[70]

The Short/Beerenfenger Killings and their Aftermath, 2 October 2003

The increased threat warnings related to the possible deployment of vehicle-borne and remote-controlled IEDs on ISAF's main service routes between Camp Warehouse, Kabul Airport, the headquarters, and Camp Julien. The KMNB Military Police Company, working with ISTAR Company, prepared Contingency Operation AEGIS, which then became Operation BASEBALL. This operation established overt and covert observation posts covering the supply routes looking for IED cells emplacing devices or keeping a lookout for suspect vehicles. The general idea was to deter enemy activity, identify the players when they complained about lack of opportunities, and then track the players back to their leaders.

Over in west Kabul, 3 RCR continued with its framework operations in the PDs. In addition, LCol Denne remained concerned about the rural areas of the western districts and their linkages to routes west through the valleys into Wardak province and Logar province to the south. There were a number of issues. First, these areas had been generally unpatrolled by ISAF prior to the arrival of 3 RCR, so there was little knowledge about who was there, what they were up to or who they were aligned with. Second, terrorists, narcotics smugglers, or other anti-Afghan Transitional Administration elements did not recognize the artificial boundary established as the limit of the ISAF area of operations.

3 RCR mounted Operation WOLVERINE to gather information on those areas. WOLVERINE was sequential: the western district was broken down into sub-sectors A through E. Recce Platoon, with a forward observation officer/forward air controller and engineer support, patrolled into those areas to demonstrate an overt presence. WOLVERINE was stood down for a time while Operation POWER PLAY was the focus of operations, but it came back into full swing again afterwards. Another operation, GRIZZLY, was essentially an extension of WOLVERINE.[71] Of interest were a number of valleys and re-entrants southwest of Camp Julien, including the Jowz Valley. Patrols from 3 RCR moved about gathering local information, while CIMIC teams examined the possibility of extending aid projects to the populations in those areas. These were wild and desolate areas, with sparser populations the further away the patrols got from west Kabul. Roads were unpaved and amounted to goat tracks in many places.

On 2 October 2003, a Canadian Iltis vehicle was blown up during a patrol in the Jowz Valley. Sgt Robert Short and Cpl Robbie Beerenfenger were killed and three others wounded. While the media focused on the unsuitability of the Iltis as a patrol vehicle, the Canadian contingent mourned the loss of two soldiers. 24 Field Squadron's EOD experts moved to the site to assess what had happened. They determined that one or more Soviet TM 57 anti-tank mines plus another device had destroyed the Iltis and killed its crew. The device was situated in a wheel rut on the trail. The engineers had proved the route

previously, that is, it was a known route. The day before, a Bison ambulance and an engineer truck had driven south to north on the trail, and a LAV III, a Bison ambulance, an engineer truck, and two Iltis vehicles had also traversed the route earlier. The engineers concluded that the mines had been laid in the time between the convoys passing over the area and that it was not a "legacy" mine.[72]

Photo Credit: DND KA2003-A358D

The gargantuan Zettelmeyer front-end loader was certified capable of counter-mine warfare under certain conditions. This one struck a mine during a route clearance operation in western Kabul.

The killings were deemed a "mine strike" to reduce public uproar in part because it took time to decipher the Byzantine motives behind the attack. Short and Beerenfenger were murdered in a contract killing orchestrated by HiG. The killers were paid between $5 000 and $10 000 for the operation. One school of thought was that increased Canadian patrols in western districts had interfered with narcotics smuggling and that this was a message to get the Canadians to back off. Another school of thought was that the killings were contracted by someone in the AMF who did not want AMF units demobilized. If, in theory, there were still a threat to Kabul, the AMF would not be disbanded. The third theory was that this action was from those behind the coup attempt and it was payback for Operation POWER PLAY. MGen Leslie privately concluded that "this was a politically-motivated premeditated attack for which the murderers were financially compensated."[73]

LCol Denne wanted to mount a clearance operation, Operation OVERTHROW, into the Jowz Valley to demonstrate that Canada could maintain the psychological high ground and would not be deterred from patrolling western districts. OVERTHROW had covert

recce teams infiltrate at night into hides to observe the valley. Then an engineer package would clear the route for Para Company and Quebec Company. The covert part of the operation went in on 7 October 2003. The main effort for OVERTHROW, however, kept being delayed because of other activity in the city. Then on 29 October when the engineers went in to clear the route, a Zettelmeyer armoured earthmover struck a mine and was disabled, shaking up the driver, but not wounding or killing him. Operation OVERTHROW was suspended.[74]

The Short and Beerenfenger killings prompted 3 RCR to review its dispositions and equipment. A request went in for the deployment of more Bison eight-wheeled armoured personnel carriers, while the companies equipped with Iltis Jeeps were restricted to hard pack roads in the city. Charles Company with its LAV III vehicles took up the slack in the western districts, but only up to a point since these vehicles were required in the event of further unpleasantness with the militias in the city.[75]

The hunt was now on for those responsible for the killings, but it would take time to determine who the specific perpetrators were. An ongoing United Kingdom–United States operation focusing on HiG leadership was briefed to ISAF prior to the 2 October killings, so by coincidence, ISAF was able to take advantage of the situation. On the night of 7 October, actionable intelligence was received on the possible location of Abu Bakr, the main HiG commander in the Kabul region (who was, incidentally, a Tajik). This was transmitted to KMNB HQ and ISTAR Company deployed resources to observe the location, which was in the British area of operations. Once the Kabul City Police was alerted, the United Kingdom company formed the outer cordon, the Afghan police went in, and Abu Bakr was arrested.[76]

ISAF kept its ears open for any more information on the 2 October attack. A source indicated that Anwar Dangar was involved in some way, that he had apparently brought mines with him into western districts in late August in order to go after ISAF targets.[77] 3 RCR nearly dropped everything to go after anything HiG-related in its area of operations. On 14 October, reports came in from local sources developed by Canadian resources that Dangar was in Chaki Wardak Village where he met with three Taliban sub-commanders. A Taliban operative who transported remote detonators and distributed them to the insurgents met Dangar.[78] Then, on 28 October, human intelligence teams and the Canadian ASIC tracked those responsible for the attack to Logar province, which was, unfortunately, outside ISAF's area of operations.[79] Dangar's role was now less than clear.

The problem was that 3 RCR and KMNB had only so many resources. LCol Denne had to strike the right balance between mounting a protracted rural counterinsurgency operation as a force protection measure and maintaining urban patrolling to keep the districts stable and at the same time keep an eye on Sayyaf's militia. Operation FOXHOUND,

the PD 5 and PD 14 surge operation, had been on hold because of POWER PLAY and now because of OVERTHROW. One personality of interest appeared to be central to events, but there might be more. Should the battalion group focus solely on Dangar? Or should ISTAR Company? How many of ISTAR Company's resources should be tasked for such an operation? LCol Denne and his staff would continue to juggle their resources throughout October and November in the run-up to the Constitutional Loya Jirga.[80]

There was more fallout from the Bakr seizure. The National Directorate of Security was miffed because the police were involved and tried to muddy the waters by arguing that the man seized was not Abu Bakr. ISTAR sources reported that HiG was preparing retaliation against ISAF for Bakr's arrest. HiG and the Taliban subsequently mounted a propaganda campaign against the transitional administration and ISAF in Kabul's mosques. ISAF's information operations people had not anticipated such a move as they had not viewed religious institutions as an avenue for messaging. As a result, BGen Devlin started to meet regularly with the religious leaders in the city in order to build relationships and to counter insurgent messaging.[81]

By early November 2003, a British source (which was not part of ISAF and did not flow into their process) informed MGen Leslie that information was available on the future movements of the 2 October killers. It was possible that they might come back into the city as part of the Bakr payback operation. MGen Leslie asked NDHQ for release authority to use CANSOF to handle the detention. A plan was put in place to have a Canadian rifle platoon from Para Company act as the entry force while supported by a Gurkha company. As there was no Canadian detainee facility, the British would handle the terrorists once they were apprehended. This operation, Operation CUTAWAY, went on six-hour notice to move on 14 November. An associated operation, Operation VICTOR, which involved a possible out-of-area seizure of a HiG target west of the western districts by Charles Company, was put on eight-hour notice to move.[82] The next day, British handlers determined that their source was probably dead. Operation CUTAWAY was put on hold, pending the re-appearance of the targets.[83]

ISAF Security Coordination with the Afghan Transitional Administration

The events surrounding Operation POWER PLAY highlighted for ISAF commanders the ongoing problems of having too many armies and too many power brokers in competition with the Afghan Transitional Administration, the only organization in Kabul that the international community formally deemed legitimate. The power brokers had ostensibly agreed to adopt this state of affairs back in November 2001 in the Bonn Agreement, but they were only adhering to the letter of the agreement and not the spirit of it. The UN- and Japanese-led DDR process was already stalling out when the Canadians hit the ground

in August, and while the French, British, and Americans were making some progress in training the Afghan National Army, it was in no position to challenge the power brokers and their mechanized forces. Something had to be done to link the new army with the government, and to shift the allegiance of, or convert, the militia forces so they could not be used to support parallel power structures not only in Kabul but throughout the country.

At issue were the command and control arrangements for the Afghan Ministry of Defence. At the start of the Canadian involvement in Kabul, the 'Ministry of Defence' was a convenient term for a collection of Afghan militia generals, their forces, and their benefactors. When Hamid Karzai challenged these individuals over the "land grab" in September, he decided to reform the Ministry of Defence to prevent future insubordination by reducing the number of Tajik commanders. There were concerns that introducing "ethnic balance" to the Ministry of Defence would slow down the DDR process even further – already a power broker in Parwan was making noises that he wasn't going to go along with having his heavy weapons taken away.[84]

At the same time, Minister Jalali was having issues with the Ministry of the Interior. Did the Ministry of the Interior control the National Directorate of Security? To what extent did they have control over, or the allegiance of, police district commanders in Kabul? There appeared to be no parallel programme like DDR to deal with the police.

The upcoming Constitutional Loya Jirga was going to require an immense security operation to protect it from outside interference. These security operations had to have an Afghan face, otherwise the impression that Karzai was an international community puppet protected by international troops would be exploited by all and sundry. This was commonly understood by those involved with the process. Bringing together the Afghan security forces leadership with the UN and ISAF was one way of achieving both aims. Consequently, ISAF gently proposed to Minister Jalali that he establish a Joint Security Coordination Centre.[85] At the same time, MGen Leslie made the rounds in Kabul to get a variety of antagonistic individuals on side, while BGen Devlin did the same at the street level. The Joint Security Coordination Centre was up and running by 25 September.

On 2 October 2003, former militia officers protesting their release held the first of many demonstrations at the Ministry of Defence office.[86] It was not clear if these demonstrations were orchestrated political pressure or spontaneous events, but they posed some concerns not only over continued DDR operations but regarding the tactics being employed by various power brokers. ISAF developed information that there were meetings held on 26 September and 5 October led by Rabbani and Sayyaf. Abdullah, Bismillah Khan, Fahim Khan, Taj Mohammad Wardak, and Yunis Qanuni also participated. The purpose of the meetings was to organize a propaganda campaign designed to weaken Hamid Karzai's credibility and then promote Rabbani as the future (and fundamentalist) leader

of Afghanistan. One part of the plan involved targeting the DDR process because the power brokers did not want to lose control of their armies.[87]

To what extent the fundamentalists among these men interacted with the fundamentalists of the Taliban or HiG through intermediaries during this time remains open to speculation. It was imperative at the time that the DDR process be reinvigorated to reduce the threat of military power, which could be brought to bear on the Afghan Transitional Administration and the upcoming Constitutional Loya Jirga process.

Hamid Karzai made his move and by 16 October, the Ministry of Defence was restructured with 22 newly appointed leaders. General Abdul Rahim Wardak (a Pashtun) became the Deputy Minister, while Bismillah Khan (a Tajik) became the Chief of Defence. Fahim Khan remained the Minister, but he and Bismillah Khan were long-term antagonists so all three balanced each other out.[88] With a reformed Ministry of Defence and linkages between the various security services around the city, the likelihood of success for DDR and the Constitutional Loya Jirga increased.

In the wake of the Ministry of Defence success, UNAMA raised the issue of "initiatives aimed at boosting [the transitional administrations'] governance structure" with ISAF. UNAMA complained that "major problems continue to exist due to a lack of communication and coordination among various Afghan Transitional Administration ministries and the absence of a comprehensive indication of the financial implications attached to running the government." One idea raised in this meeting was the possibility of having a 'Policy Management Unit' back up Cabinet in order to "identify strategic objectives and coordinate the activities of various ministries, with the intent of preserving specific competencies while achieving broad coherence at the policy level."[89] UNAMA tried but failed to implement this idea effectively in the long term. There were others who discreetly requested help, like Abdul Karimi in the Ministry of Justice, who was not getting as much help from the Italians as he needed. "There is an increasing tendency by the Afghan institutions to seek ISAF's good offices in order to overcome political sensitivities or adjust uneven power politics, so that reform endeavours can move forward. ISAF should not be drawn into internal political intricacies. However, by being perceived as a reliable and effective third party, ISAF can use its leverage to bolster inter-ministerial communication."[90] Hamid Karzai would approach the Canadian Army's ISAF contingent in 2004 to provide such an organization. It would eventually deploy in 2005 and be called the Strategic Advisory Team-Afghanistan.

Canada's Embedded Training Team and the Afghan National Army

A key component in creating a legitimate Afghan national army to offset the militia forces was Task Force PHOENIX, the American-led Afghan National Army pillar of the Bonn Agreement. This organization consisted of American, British, and French trainers

seconded from their Operation ENDURING FREEDOM contingents. TF Phoenix operated under the command of Combined Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force (CJCMOTF), an American command under Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan (OMC-A), and as such was not part of ISAF. The camp for the 1st Afghan National Army Brigade was under construction next to Camp Julien and TF Phoenix was looking for facilities for several American Embedded Training Teams (ETTs). The Canadian contingent at CJCMOTF had an informal request from the Americans to see if the ETTs could live in Camp Julien.[91] MGen Leslie supported this in order to simplify the defensive plan for Camp Julien, but also to improve relations with American forces operating around Kabul as there were issues with the coordination of several coalitions operating in the city.[92]

A number of other factors coincided that drew Canada into helping train the Afghan army in 2003. This in turn led to Canada's deep involvement with Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams in the 2006-2011 period and beyond. First, the Canadian officers that were part of CJCMOTF were looking toward having Canadian Military Training and Assistance Plan programme support for TF Phoenix. Second, the planners in Ottawa in discussions with MGen Leslie were already looking at an exit strategy for Kabul – the PRT was one path, but involvement in Afghan National Army training might be another. Assisting with TF Phoenix in some fashion would keep Canada's options open in Afghanistan.[93]

When the TF PHOENIX team visited Camp Julien to assess its laydown facilities, they informally asked if Canada wanted to join TF PHOENIX with an Embedded Training Team to help out with the 1st Afghan National Army Brigade. Col Hodgson thought this was a good idea and raised it with MGen Leslie, who was right in the middle of Operation POWER PLAY. The need to have a viable national army was highlighted during these events. Some organization had to replace the AMF not only in Kabul but eventually throughout the country, as the "formation of the ANA is a critical piece of the future viability of the central government. The establishment of a safe and secure environment throughout Afghanistan hinges upon the Afghan National Army becoming an independent organization and viable presence throughout the country."[94]

There was some internal debate. The DCDS staff in Ottawa did not want forward commanders committing Canada to things that might have larger implications. One of these involved the possibility that Afghan Army battalions (*kandaks*) might have to deploy outside Kabul with their trainers, whether to support Operation ENDURING FREEDOM or the Afghan Transitional Administration as it set out enforcing DDR. Ottawa was assured that TF Phoenix was "not associated with CJTF-180 and has no offensive role whatsoever." The Canadians in Kabul reminded Ottawa that part of ISAF's mandate was to help train Afghan Army units anyway and Canada was being asked to help.[95]

The DCDS concurred but insisted that no additional personnel or money would be sent to support this initiative. It had to come from TF Kabul resources. The Canadian commanders examined the problem after sounding out their American counterparts and determined that 20 officers and non-commissioned members could be made available. There would be three mentors per company, with four companies, plus six staff members and two team leaders. The aim was "to coach, teach, and mentor the leadership of 1st Kandak, 1st Brigade."[96]

The Canadian ETT was formerly established on 7 October 2003. ETT members wore arid CADPAT uniforms to distinguish themselves from ISAF troops wearing green uniforms and Afghan Army troops, who wore green woodland camouflage uniforms. With a focus on individual and collective training, the Canadian ETT geared the Kandak's training toward providing security for the Constitutional Loya Jirga as opposed to, say, mechanized operations. On occasion, F Battery joined the Canadian ETT to assist with mortar training. All Canadians had to familiarize themselves with the Afghans' plethora of Chinese and Soviet small arms and support weapons.

The Canadian ETT had to adjust to how 1st Kandak was organized and led. 1st Kandak was established in 2002 and had approximately 360 personnel. The Afghan battalion's leadership was mostly made up of Mujahideen fighters from the 1980s, while some of the soldiers had experience with one or the other factional armies in the late 1990s. As Canadian ETT Capt Michael Chagnon pointed out, "They had no doctrine, standardized tactics or set standards, and had been subjected to a variety of training first from U.S. reserve special forces, then British trainers, then American ETTs from 10th Mountain Division." It was as if the Canadian ETT was starting from scratch. The Afghans took well to range training with a variety of weapons but non-commissioned officer/officer interaction left much to be desired. That said, the Canadian ETT, with infinite patience, settled in to help the Afghans improve their lot and prepare to protect the fledgling state.[97]

Spin-off benefits at the strategic level of the Canadian contribution to TF Phoenix included the anomaly that the Canadian contingent was from ISAF, not Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, though this would change the following year when Operation ARCHER was stood up as a separate mission to encompass the Canadian ETTs and other Canadian involvement with Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. NATO staffs at AFNORTH congratulated themselves for having such foresight to develop an "in" with TF Phoenix.[98]

During this time, 3 RCR looked to take on a similar mission with the local Afghan police. This was not formalized as a separate operation, even though the Germans were responsible for training and organizing the Afghan police as part of the Bonn Agreement. LCol Denne and his staff noted that an improved police force in the Canadian area of

operations would have a positive benefit on all levels of the operation: improve coordination, increase legitimacy, and get the police away from the power brokers. 3 RCR worked up a training plan where each company would run a six-day course for 20 to 25 Kabul City Police officers, each in their districts, and then build from there. The courses focused on running vehicle checkpoints, basic communication and organization, and the passage of information. It was a modest but effective programme and, as with the Afghan National Army training, it improved security for the upcoming Constitutional Loya Jirga.[99]

Civil-Military Operations: Civil-Military Cooperation, Canadian International Development Agency, and Development

The 3 RCR CIMIC platoon, deployed immediately to assess the Canadian operating area. After two weeks of work, the teams discovered that almost all of the wells drilled by aid organizations in the Western districts were dry. The initial report to ISAF HQ noted that "this could be an indication that well projects are not coordinated with the appropriate ministries or organizations."[100] As it turned out, this was a massive understatement. At the same time, CIMIC teams from Norway that were part of the KMNB CIMIC group moved about the Canadian area of operations without informing 3 RCR. There was a CIMIC Coordination Centre at KMNB HQ. Where was the coordination? As it turned out, there had not been any coordination on previous KMNB rotations, so the new KMNB HQ set out to correct the matter.[101]

The main issue was the lack of a clear division of labour between the brigade and battalion levels, the brigade and the force, the force and the government, and the force and the Non-Governmental Organizations. There were hundreds of aid organizations in Kabul; few attempted to coordinate with the Afghanistan Transitional Administration and just did their own thing. Few wanted to coordinate with ISAF at any level – operational or tactical as they viewed themselves as 'neutral' and the UN-mandated security force as 'belligerent.'

The Afghan Transitional Administration, on the other hand, was in the process of creating a national approach to development throughout 2003 and this approach would not be unveiled for some time, so even if the aid organizations wanted to coordinate their efforts, there was no place to plug into other than the UN and its organs. Then there were UN entities or personalities that thought that they should handle development for the Afghan Transitional Administration and established what amounted to 'aid competition' with the transitional administration.

Though not new to the Canadian Army, CIMIC was still struggling to find a proper fit in the institution. There was no CIMIC trade and, for the most part, CIMIC officers were reserve personnel trained for the task and brought together in ad hoc fashion for each mission. There were no CIMIC units. LCol Denne's foresight and acceptance of the need

for CIMIC notwithstanding, others in the Army were not fully convinced of the efficacy of CIMIC, and it had never really received attention in the higher education institution of the Army. This outlook was in part a hold-over from the Cold War where CIMIC consisted of a handful of officers in 4 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group in West Germany who drove around and paid for manoeuvre damage during FALLEX and drank beer with German town mayors. In Kosovo, there was a single battalion CIMIC officer with the deployed battle group. Operation APOLLO also had a single CIMIC officer.

The 3 RCR CIMIC platoon, on the other hand, did ground-breaking work in Kabul with a full platoon. CIMIC's purpose, simply put, was to build good will with the local people and then provide an environment where those people were more likely to interact with the security forces to provide information on anti-government activities like crime and terrorism which in turn, as security improved, benefitted them as much as the security forces. That good will consisted of the identification of the needs for a local community, discussions with the leaders of the community about how to address those needs, and the provision of some support to assist the population in addressing the most pressing problems that would have the greatest community impact.

The distinction between CIMIC projects and developmental aid provided by international, national, and non-governmental aid organizations was seriously blurred in the Kabul environment, something which antagonized supposedly 'neutral' aid agencies who saw CIMIC as 'biased' and 'pro-war' – the debate as to the neutrality of developmental aid in a war was not developed enough at this point to countervail such arguments. This problem would play out on a larger scale in the debates over PRTs in 2003-2005.

That said, CIMIC platoon was able to identify and establish 74 projects that could assist the population and support force protection measures in the Canadian area of operations. They were all fundamental things required by any community: clean water; housing and shelter for the police; housing of the educational system and supplies for schools; and medical supplies for local-level medical care.[102] Unfortunately, only 18 of those 74 projects were completed by December 2003 because the Canadian International Development Agency blocked the aid money.

That situation related to the problematic issue of Canada's approach to CIMIC interaction regarding developmental aid and the role development was supposed to play in Canada's strategy toward Afghanistan. As seen with Operation APOLLO, CIDA was not interested in assisting the 3 PPCLI Battle Group; it forced 3 PPCLI to conduct ad hoc development aid with force protection around Kandahar Air Field. For Operation ATHENA, things were supposed to be different.

Prior to Operation ATHENA, the Canadian International Development Agency was virtually forced by its elected masters to allocate development money to Afghanistan.[103]

When negotiations between the elected government of Canada and CIDA were complete, they agreed that the money would be spent in a convoluted fashion. A tranche of $250 000 was supposed to be given to 3 RCR and spent through CIMIC; the funds were to be given by CIDA to NATO to give to ISAF HQ.[104] As it turned out, there was no bureaucratic mechanism to move the Canadian money to NATO, to AFNORTH, and then to ISAF. NATO staff marveled at the Canadian collectivist 'naïveté' and took pains to let the Canadian commanders in Kabul know it.[105] To make up the shortfall, MGen Leslie directed that TF Kabul operations and maintenance funds to the tune of $300 000 be made available for CIMIC operations. The Canadian CIMIC platoon identified and prioritized a variety of projects, most of them associated with achieving force protection through local engagement, and set about implementing them. Canadian media mistakenly reported those projects as CIDA projects, which annoyed the soldiers. In a report back to Canada, the DCDS was informed in September that "we have not yet received one penny from CIDA" and he was warned that when the media started asking questions, Canadians in Kabul would tell the truth and something "may be getting lost at levels below the Ministers et al, specifically within CIDA." Notably, "We do not have time to wait for each individual project to be approved by CIDA Ottawa. The sums are far too low and small to justify the current Byzantine process and we may be back in Canada and the mission concluded before being allowed by CIDA to spend a dime."[106]

Incredibly, elements in NDHQ in Ottawa investigated whether it was legally acceptable to allow operations and maintenance money to be used for force protection via CIMIC. Fortunately, the DCDS supported the forward commander and threw back at the financial people that there was a lack of clear Canadian Forces policy on CIMIC.[107]

By October, nothing had been accomplished. "I am beginning to believe this was a very bad idea," DComd ISAF reported. By mid-October, after the killings of Short and Beerenfenger and the dramatically increased need to connect with the population to gain information on enemy movements, there was still no movement. MGen Leslie threatened to raise the matter with the Prime Minister during his visit but was instructed not to.[108] It was nothing short of exasperating. The Canadians in Kabul needed monies for a critical task, monies that were identified and allocated, but could not be accessed. The frustration is worth quoting at length:

> This whole process makes us look like members of the cast of a remarkably exaggerated session of "Yes, Minister." My proposed message to CIDA is quite simple…'Us semi-literate ground apes want money to dig deep holes for water and fix smashed schools so locals not hurt us and we do good. You give money to us, we use to make life better for poor people. This makes big boss of Canada happy. This makes us happy. This makes locals happy. You CIDA persons get off derriere and give us small bag of gold toot-sweet (bilingual content for extra points) or we think nasty

> thoughts about you for two hands of years.' To put this in context we are asking for and have been told that we are expecting to get one tenth of one percent of the CIDA funds allocated for Afghanistan…Apparently (unconfirmed) the CIDA minister has retained approval for each project, no matter how big or small, under her exclusive control. This may explain some of the bottlenecks. The situation is approaching critical….[109]

By mid-November, still nothing: "Words fail me…DND trains for violence as a last resort so as to impose the will of the nation. CIDA needs violence in the first instance so that the will of the nation will apply to them."[110] The CIDA representative in Kabul was replaced with the high-energy and collegial Nipa Bannerjee, but even Bannerjee was unable to gain traction in Ottawa. It was in January 2004 that there was some movement:

> We are past being cumbersome and into the ponderous stage. The very unfair and certainly unjustified mental image that springs to mind when considering these two institutions negotiating/communicating on this issue is much akin to two elephants engaged in the procreative act. Much bellowing, flapping of ears, incomprehensible grunts, trampling of innocent bystanders and voila, 22 months later something loud, ugly, and smelly with a big nose is brought into the world….When I get some time to think, my interest will be in trying to find the match-maker that set this whole silly idea in motion…I know who played what role within NDHQ as is true within CIDA. Somewhere in DFAIT, though, is some person who just had to find a harder way. Where is my elephant gun?[111]

The negative tone of the CIDA/Canadian Forces relationship, established in the early days of the conflict by those leading CIDA, would continue for several years whenever Canadian interdepartmental issues were raised. Simply put, there were serious issues with CIDA in the Ottawa bureaucratic environment. The various elected Canadian governments over the years simply did not assert effective leadership over CIDA, a government department spending Canadian taxpayers' money. The problems with CIDA and development in Afghanistan that emerged later in the conflict were not new and were noted half a decade earlier in Afghanistan. This had long-term effects on the Canadian effort in Kandahar later on.

Also prefiguring events five years later, Canadian Army CIMIC teams in Kabul went above and beyond the resources they had to get the job done. Enabled by the force commander and the DCDS, CIMIC was able to implement a significant number of projects in west Kabul, such as a water reservoir and pump house with potable water for all, 10 potable wells in surrounding districts, several local employment programmes at Camp Julien, the provision of school equipment and small school repair, assistance with health

services in the Jowz Valley, and the construction of guard houses for the police in isolated areas. As the staff noted in December 2003, "it is now our opinion that it would be too difficult to obtain CIDA funding at this late point…and subsequently obtain CIDA approval to spend the funds for each project (based on CIDA's cumbersome project approval process)."[112]

CIMIC platoon efforts also had a relationship to local and strategic information operations. There was a lot of Canadian media coverage on the battalion group's CIMIC activities which was useful on the home front in highlighting Canadian operations in Afghanistan for a Canadian population. Unfortunately, the Canadian contingent lacked an integral psychological operations capability to fully exploit the CIMIC platoon's good works with the population and the antagonistic forces in and around Kabul. Though they could draw on brigade psychological operations resources, the synergy necessary at the tactical level was lacking. Psychological operations, like CIMIC, were also a fledgling capability for the Canadian Army, with no trade or unit structure to protect and encourage their development. It would take some years to correct this deficiency.

'Night Work'

Canada's involvement with special operations forces in complex environments was minimal prior to Afghanistan. The Kabul operations afforded new opportunities to understand this normally concealed aspect of coalition operations. For the most part, Canada deployed a small team of CANSOF operators to Kabul – this was Operation ARTEMIS and as noted earlier, this was not formally part of Operation ATHENA. This CANSOF contingent was generally structured for the close protection of VIPs and their retrieval if necessary. They were not necessarily in Kabul to conduct direct action operations. The ISAF commander did have a small team of German SOF as well. For the most part, SOF remained a national prerogative and not a NATO ISAF one.[113]

That said, numerous informal relationships existed in part to reduce the possibility of "blue on blue." The main problem was the sheer number and variety of special operations forces in and around Kabul. As one observer noted, "literally not a month would go by when we didn't discover a new key player."[114] In the main, these were American organizations for several agencies, including some that were even competing with each other, and another that was completely entrepreneurial, where an ex-U.S. Special Forces individual portrayed himself and his team as current special forces personnel.[115]

ISAF HQ took a cautious approach to key-individual capture operations. The concept of "second row support" was in play in that ISAF wanted as much as possible to reinforce the sovereignty of the Afghan Transitional Administration government, so the National Directorate of Security or Kabul police had to take the lead even if targeting information came from ISAF or other national sources. Similarly, if the National Directorate of Security

or Kabul City Police needed ISAF back-up, there had to be a process. In both cases, ISAF was accused by allies (or THE ally) and even the Afghan security forces of "taking too long." This was designed to "make sure that everything was checked out ahead of time because we didn't want to get sucked into one war lord using us against another…it had nothing to do with [national caveats]."

Additionally, not all ISAF partners had the capability or the national will to do 'night work,' as it was euphemistically called. In those cases, one nation's resources could be used in another nation's area of operations. However, in some cases, the forces of a third party might even be observing the same target:

> [Kabul Multinational Brigade] was conducting a mission [in the French area] and they were all set to go and we're all waiting tensely around the telephone and the radios back at ISAF HQ. The battle group commander comes on and in high speed French tells us in no uncertain terms that they have to abort because they've found themselves at the start line and sharing that start line with the forces from another agency going after the same target…it was all right when we would bump into American or other forces because of the commonality of language but it would get extraordinarily tense when you have Afghans who are faced with the unexpected.[116]

In Canada's case, the Short and Beerenfenger killings highlighted the problem of the artificial boundary in the mountains that delineated ISAF's area of operations. If Ottawa would not permit Canadian forces to operate on the other side of the line, as it were, and that line could not be moved, then how was Canada going to attenuate terrorist activity in those areas? The informal discussions that took place during the tracking of the Short/Beerenfenger killers between DComd ISAF and British forces led to discussions on the possibility of British SOF being employed on the other side of the line. This activity was supported by Commander in Chief AFNORTH, whose primary concern was operational security, so Afghan entities in Kabul were not in the know. In return, the Canadian ASIC assisted British forces with some targeting aspects in Kabul City.[117] This bilateral relationship continued into 2005 until Canada withdrew from Kabul and headed south.

In the short term, the relationship was expanded by November 2003 to include the United States and as a result, it became key in the apprehension of several terrorists. There were an estimated four main targets: two in the British area, and one each in the German and French areas. The Canadian ASIC and elements of ISTAR Company played a significant role in this effort. In December 2003, Mamor Malang, one of the top three HiG commanders in the city, and a man who reported directly to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, was nabbed by a Kabul City Police patrol at a vehicle checkpoint, with the British company backing them up. He was taken to the British base, Camp Souter, and then

transferred to Bagram Air Field.[118] 'Night Work' became an increasingly crucial aspect of the Canadian campaign in Kabul which, over time, became instrumental in completely dislocating the HiG organization for extended periods, particularly during critical events like the loya jirga and the 2004 election.

Task Force Kabul Operations: November 2003

Operation OVERTHROW, the planned clearance of the Jowz Valley, was suspended when a Zettelmeyer armoured earthmover from the Field Squadron struck a mine. Some of the Operation WOLVERINE and Operation GRIZZLY covert patrols in western districts C and E were shifted to maintain continuous observation of the valley. Operation FOXHOUND, the planned surge into PDs 5 and 14, was modified because of manning issues. A series of patrols and observation post operations were planned instead, pending the resources for a surge into the districts to disrupt criminal activity. (See Figure 4-10) 3 RCR involvement with the United Kingdom patrol company led to the exchange of a section of personnel with the Gurkhas in Operation KHUKURI: this was the first of several profitable engagements between the Canadian Army and the Gurkhas in Afghanistan.

The escalation of the terrorist threat in November during the lead-up to the Constitutional Loya Jirga altered the Canadian contingent's operational pattern. Operation LURKER was a series of random or directed short-term vehicle checkpoints, observation posts, and local surges from Camp Julien into immediately adjacent areas in order to dislocate terrorist movements and observation of the camp or its convoys. One Operation LURKER focus became the King's Palace, a huge heavily damaged structure across the road from the camp. One patrol discovered two 107mm rockets wired to a car battery and pointed into Camp Julien. Snipers were inserted at night to keep watchful eye and Quebec Company increased foot patrolling two kilometres outside the camp. Five days later, an IED consisting of two 100mm shells was discovered in an area used by the patrols. Three days after that, friendly Kabul City Police from PD 7 arrested two people carrying 35 pounds of explosives on their way from the village of Rish Khvor. Initially, it was believed they were on their way to the King's Palace, but as it turned out, their target was the Constitutional Loya Jirga. LCol Denne's concerns increased and he wanted permission to use his surveillance resources to trigger a "second row strike" operation using the Kabul City Police. Operation LURKER continued to turn up interesting aspects of the King's Palace – one patrol found a tunnel that led to an observation post which could not be seen from any of the Camp Julien observation posts or towers. It was well positioned and recently constructed.[119]

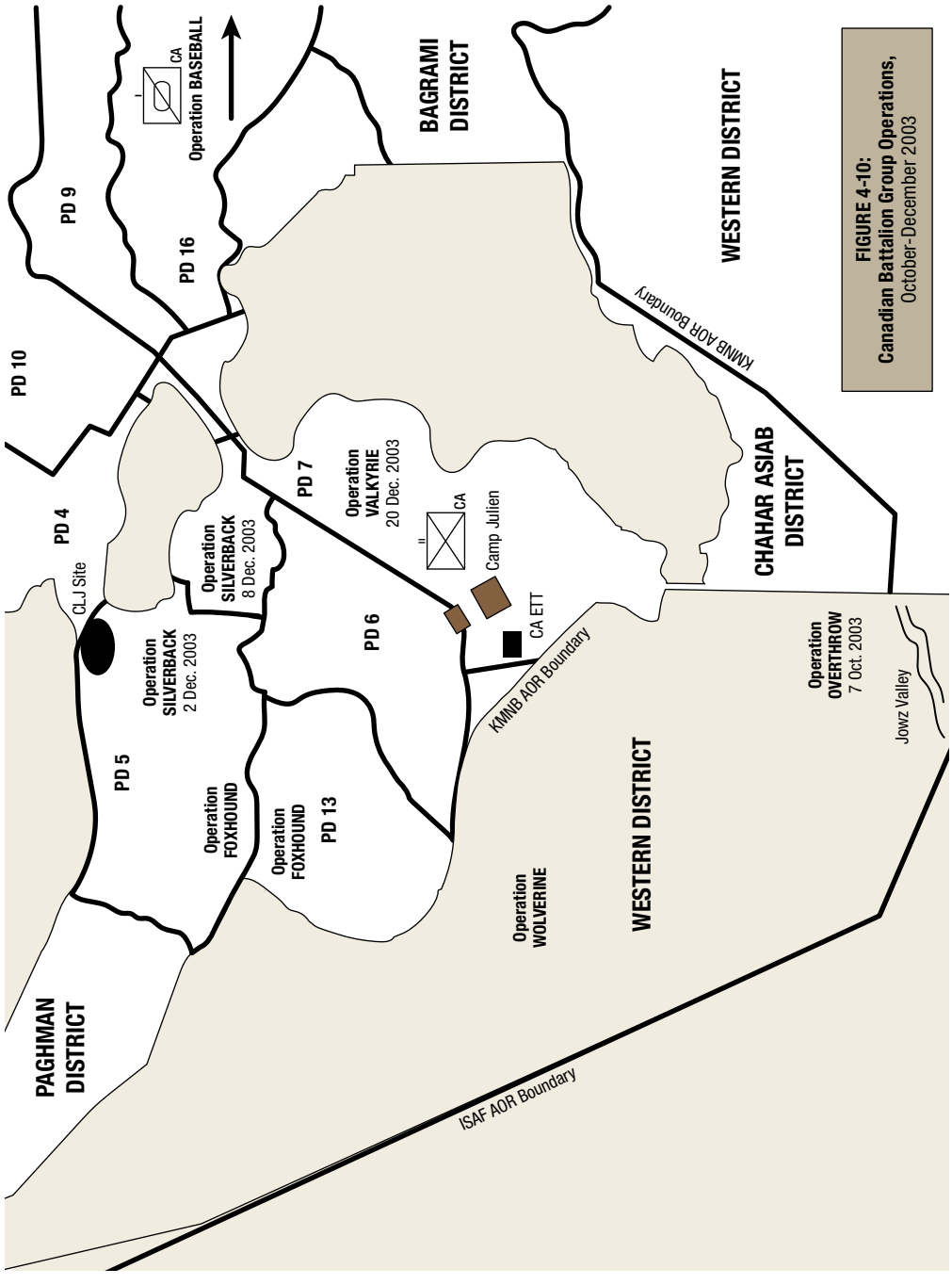


FIGURE 4-10:
Canadian Battalion Group Operations,
October-December 2003

Figure 4-10: Canadian Battalion Group Operations, October-December 2003

Introducing Unmanned Aerial Vehicles: The Sperwer TUAV

The decision to acquire the SAGEM Sperwer ("Sparrowhawk") earlier in May 2003 finally gave the Canadian Army an unmanned aerial surveillance system. Canada lagged behind the other NATO countries in UAV acquisition and integration, so the acquisition of the CU-161 Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicle or TUAV as the Sperwer was known in Canadian service was a welcome development. By November 2003, four delta-winged TUAV airframes with their cameras, two ground control stations, the catapult launching system and system maintenance support was finally assembled and operating. Manned by a combination of artillery troops and Air Command navigators, the unit was designated TUAV Troop and assigned to ISTAR Company.

The capability that the TUAV brought to the environment in Kabul was unlike anything the Canadian Army had experienced before. The CU-161's camera was superb, as was its ability to loiter for hours at a time. 3 RCR was so impressed they asked for a jury-rigged ground feed to their tactical operations centre so they could observe and a dedicated radio link so they could talk to the All Source Intelligence Centre and task the system. Decision-makers now had the ability to observe an operation or an event in real time, not wait for it to be relayed by radio or interpreted through the news media. This had positive and negative effects – it permitted rapid reaction to an event, but it also increased the likelihood of micromanagement of an event with a subsequent loss of perspective on the span of simultaneous events.[120] This caused some problems. First, having a system like the TUAV and integrating it into the various processes used by the Canadian Army to conduct operations while the Army was in an operational environment meant that there was a steep learning curve beyond just the physical processes of flying and recovering the airframe.[121]

By January 2004, all of the airframes were damaged and most needed out-of-theatre repair – one even flew into a mountain as the camera ball was slewed around looking for a landing site. 24 Field Squadron had to clear a minefield so the aircraft could be recovered. There was media criticism and mockery. Then there was inter-service criticism from elements in Air Command who either a) didn't like UAVs; b) thought the Army should not control them; or c) both.[122] There was an immense amount of pressure, and most of it landed on ISTAR Company and the TUAV Troop. These crews fought to demonstrate to the detractors that UAVs were a vital element in the Army's force structure. Their efforts were not in vain and bore fruit over the course of Canada's engagement in Afghanistan.

Problems in the North – and the South

Instability pulsed throughout Afghanistan while ISAF focused on stabilizing the capital. The international coalitions were trying to keep a lid on problems in the north and the south in the run-up to the Constitutional Loya Jirga. Once again, the long-term effects of what was occurring in late 2003 would resonate over the next decade, particularly for the Canadian Army.

In the north, a long-standing rivalry between Rashid Dostum and Atta Mohammad Noor caused some angst in Mazar-e Sharif when fighting broke out between their respective forces in late September 2003. This rivalry dated back to the 1992-1993 period when Atta formed his own Tajik militia and marched on Mazar-e Sharif where he was defeated by Dostum's forces and it looked like a re-play now that the Taliban were disabled. Karzai intervened, fired Atta, and offered him the post of Minister for Mines and Resources. If Atta were to take the position, he would have to relinquish control over his militia forces. This situation was inadvertently problematic in that Atta was a buffer between Dostum and Fahim Khan on a number of levels, but it made DDR potentially easier, especially when Dostum's and Atta's forces were to be merged into one corps before the process was initiated. However, this process would take some time – and even U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld eventually became personally involved in December 2003 to keep the Dostum-Atta rivalry under control.[123]

As for Fahim Khan and the Panjshir Tajiks, they were resisting DDR and the cantonment of their forces north of Kabul, as they would obviously lose their ability to coerce the Afghan Transitional Administration in Kabul. Though they went along with heavy weapons cantonment in Kabul, they continued to resist DDR and cantonment up in the Panjshir Valley well into 2004. Over in Herat, in western Afghanistan, power broker Ismael Khan saw with some alarm what DDR was doing to his Uzbek and Tajik rivals, and was concerned about the idea of having an Afghan border police and customs service that didn't report to (and kick back to) him. The situation in Herat would also simmer into 2004 and blow up later that summer.[124]

There were similar problems relating to DDR in Paktia province, but the United States-led coalition was in the driver's seat in that region so it took the lead. Once again, rivalries in the Khost region related to those encountered by Operation APOLLO forces operating there in 2002 made it another potential problem area.

It was in Afghanistan's south that there were serious concerns that resonated in Kabul. There was a pattern of Taliban attacks against aid workers and moderate leaders in Kandahar and throughout the south in September 2003, which noticeably slowed the pace of development and in turn produced a "sense of alienation and perhaps even fear amongst the moderate Pashtuns." Prophetically, MGen Leslie noted in a report back to Canada:

> In the pantheon of needs, security comes first. Once a relative degree of security is achieved, reconstruction and social development can follow. I suppose the bottom line is that the status quo will not win the fight for a better Afghanistan. Either NATO/ISAF expands in the short term, with the appropriate resources to make a positive difference, or the West might find itself committing a lot of resources in a couple of years to stabilize and pacify Afghanistan the hard way.[125]

The Red Cross then suspended operations in the south in October 2003, which produced a spillover effect on "those whom are charged with doing the census, voter registration and the establishment of the electoral mechanisms"[126] needed for the 2004 elections as well as the 2003 loya jirga. Concerns increased, particularly in the run-up to the Constitutional Loya Jirga. On 11 November, a vehicle-borne IED detonated outside the UN-sponsored election office in Kandahar that was preparing the way for delegate election. Even though there were no casualties, this was interpreted by ISAF as a "direct attack against the Loya Jirga electoral process."[127]

UN Special Representative Brahimi met with DComd ISAF on 14 November 2003 prior to an emergency security meeting with the principle international commanders. Brahimi was "quite frustrated" and was "determined to get ISAF and NATO to expand across the country." Brahimi wanted ISAF escorts for convoys on the Kabul/Kandahar/Herat ring road and possibly a company for security in Kandahar to protect the UN. Leslie told him that there "is no advantage in ISAF rushing to failure by biting off more than we can chew."[128] That said, Brahimi kept UNAMA in Kandahar but with a reduced footprint.

The security meeting included Deputy Minister of Defence Wardak Lt Gen Hilal from the Afghan Army; Minister for Tribal Affairs Arif Noorzai; the new Commander CJTF-180, Lt Gen David Barno; Brahimi; and MGen Leslie. Brahimi reiterated that the attack was anti-loya jirga, and that he would recommend to the UN Secretary General that the UN expand ISAF's mandate. The participants explored various security options – the Western military representatives favoured an Afghan response, with Wardak suggesting that AMF in the south with an American command structure was another option.

This was a particularly interesting idea. UNAMA, as it turned out, had been in talks with the American commanders in Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan over the concept of a "Regional Development Zone" or RDZ earlier in 2003. Kandahar was scheduled to be the pilot stabilization project of an RDZ, which would incorporate the UN, the American PRT, and Afghan security forces from the emergent Afghan National Army and "DDR'd" militia. Using the AMF with American advisors might jump-start the RDZ process in Kandahar, which in turn could have significant short-term positive effects (the RDZ concept will be revisited in chapters dealing with the 2004-2006 period.)[129]

In any event, Ottawa was warned that "UNAMA will continue to push for a higher physical presence of ISAF units outside Kabul, particularly with respect to Kandahar, due to the interplay between security challenges, election processes, and a recent UNAMA/Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan interest to render the city the first pilot project of a regional development model."[130]

In a follow-on meeting with Hamid Karzai, and the same principles a week later, UNAMA representatives noted that the security situation was worse, that the enemy had changed his attack patterns, and had also increased his propaganda fight. Karzai was incensed and "severely criticized UNAMA for the negative messages it is sending regarding the security situation in Afghanistan. He bluntly stated that he is not concerned about the Taliban and does not consider them a threat to anything in Afghanistan. He repeated that Afghanistan's two main threats are incompetence and corruption in the Afghanistan Transitional Administration and the threat from across the border."[131]

This was astounding to the Canadians, to say the least. Karzai differentiated the Taliban in Afghanistan from the variety of its allied insurgent organizations nestled in the valleys of western Pakistan. This was contrary to the predominant view of a much larger problem with even greater implications:

> The Taliban et al have been targeting local Afghanis with some success…eliminating a variety of low and middle-level municipal leaders who are pro-ATA/pro-reform. The attacks have taken place south of the ISAF AO [area of operation], with raiders lunging across the Pakistan border, killing, then fleeing back to safety. This is infuriating the ATA and its local supporters whom are made to look even more powerless than they are…There is little doubt that CJTF-180 has recognized that some serious mucking out is long overdue in this part of the world. I speculate that perhaps the Taliban and or/AQ [Al Qaeda] (keeping in mind that the Taliban and AQ are not friends, they merely share a common enemy) have taken up the practice of hiring these local Pashtun bandits as hit teams, or to escort AQ elements…But if the US goes into Pakistan to muck out these brigands the ever-simmering resentment against the President [Musharraf] for his recent pro-US/Western stance could boil over and might result in Islamic fundamentalists seizing control over Pakistan and their nuclear weapons….What a complicated dynamic we find ourselves in. It is both appalling and fascinating….[Canada's] impact here is subtle but far more important than those living in blissful ignorance might realize.[132]

The Constitutional Loya Jirga: December 2003

The events of December 2003 were momentous in the history of Afghanistan. For the first time ever, the Afghan people were involved in selecting the type of government they wanted and the mechanisms by which they would be governed. This was a real opportunity after nearly 25 years of totalitarian repression and unremitting violence to start afresh with international community support. That support could not be made available without a government to deal with. However, the December 2003 meetings were a necessary precursor to the flow of international aid, which was crucial to the reconstruction of the country.

The preliminary event was the Emergency Loya Jirga of 2002 mandated by the Bonn Agreement. The Afghan Interim Administration's task was to work with the UN to establish the rules that would be used to create the new constitution. An emergency loya jirga, made up of representatives from throughout Afghanistan, would discuss and endorse these rules. The follow-on Afghan Transitional Administration would then create a Constitutional Commission, draft a constitution, and present it to a Constitutional Loya Jirga in 2003 for approval. The selection of delegates from around the country for this loya jirga was in itself an involved process designed to ensure broad representation.

This was a public and fragile process, subject to a variety of influences from both inside and outside Afghanistan. Western critics, mostly academics and lawyers, had their ideas of how the Afghans should be governed. They attacked the process as flawed because it did not incorporate their concepts of human rights.[133] Fundamentalist Islamic opponents to stability in Afghanistan shrilly claimed this was an "American" constitution being imposed on the Afghans by the victors and it was un-Islamic because it was not fundamentalist enough for them.[134] Every ethnic, political, and religious group in the country worried about potential loss of power and prestige in any new order that might emerge from the process. The Pashtun majority was concerned about the potential challenge to their cultural traditions by modernity, while the other groups were worried that too much power would be centralized under the Pashtuns. It became a question of who was prepared to use violence to influence the process and who was not.

At the same time, the insurgency coalesced when opponents realized how important the Constitutional Loya Jirga was and how much it threatened their objectives. By December 2003, the Taliban, HiG, Al Qaeda, and their associates formally established a new movement, the Jawahar al-Islam, or "The Shining of Islam." Its stated purpose was to combat the emergent Afghan state, which they declared to be a Western crusader construct. These groups would ultimately step up operations to interfere with the Constitutional Loya Jirga.

Then there were the Afghan power brokers. It was not clear if all, some or none of them would be co-opted by the Constitutional Loya Jirga process. Certainly, DDR and heavy weapons cantonment, coupled with the demonstrative resolve of ISAF's forces during the

unpleasantness back in September and the increased involvement in Afghan Army training played a role in convincing at least some of them to become involved in establishing a new state. It was equally probable that the monetary incentives and prestige dangled by the international community played a significant role as well. That said, there were always outliers who could throw the whole event off the rails. Not all weapons had been cantoned, and not all of the AMF units had been DDR'd, especially the ones belonging to the Panjshir Tajiks and Dostum in Mazar-e Sharif.

The UN decided that the university campus would be the site of the meetings – and that was in the Canadian area of operations. Representatives from throughout Afghanistan, about 500, would converge on Kabul, where they had to be housed, fed, and protected from intimidation. Then delegates for the various working groups would be elected from these representatives. Next, the working groups would assess each part of the draft constitution. When a final version was accepted, there would be a vote. This process would take several weeks, possibly longer than a month. A lot could go wrong in a month in Kabul.

Security coordination for the Constitutional Loya Jirga fell on the backs of MGen Leslie, BGen Devlin, LCol Denne, and the units under their command. At issue was the need to avoid the outward impression that ISAF was running the show. This was critical in that the constitutional process was already under attack as something imposed by the West. Everything possible had to be done to demonstrate to the world that Afghans were in the forefront of security for an Afghan process.

This took several forms. First, the Canadian ETT did everything it could to get 1st Kandak prepared for the security operations; they were going to be the predominant security force present at the loya jirga site. Second, the police training activities undertaken by 3 RCR were also crucial. Third, BGen Devlin convinced the Afghan National Army and the Kabul City Police to cooperate in the weeks running up to the loya jirga. A joint coordination centre was established, which included ISAF, the Afghan National Army, Kabul City Police, and the National Directorate of Security. Contingency planning and rehearsals were done by the Afghan agencies, but with Canadians keeping a close eye on the proceedings. Fourth, BGen Devlin and his staff, working with Afghan staffs, established several rings of security: the inner, outer, and long-range cordons. UNAMA, with its contractor security, would be discreetly present inside the loya jirga site, just in case. The site itself was the responsibility of 1st Kandak and the police, with Canadian combat engineers from 24 Field Squadron and their EOD/IED capability to sweep the site. Outside of the site were KMNB, the National Directorate of Security, and the balance of the Afghan National Army. ISTAR Company had Coyotes on all of the high features and UAVs orbiting above western Kabul. A Norwegian infantry company and Charles Company with its LAV IIIs constituted the Immediate

Reaction Force; they also had 24 Field Squadron EOD/IEDD support.[135] There was also the United Kingdom's "Mobile Drug Detection Team" who worked with the Kabul police during this time.

ISAF information operations also played an important role. The planners anticipated that the various insurgent groups would generate incidents, successful or not, to demonstrate that the Afghan Transitional Administration did not control the city and therefore could not protect the Constitutional Loya Jirga and thus the future of Afghanistan. The counter-message, used pre-emptively, was "We can bring 500 various determined and antagonistic personalities together under one tent and they can sit next to each other, perhaps beside an old foe, break bread and debate on the greater good. What can YOU insurgents do except kill and maim?" The message to the power brokers was, "No weapons allowed. No coercion allowed. You too can talk with your former opponents for the greater good of Afghanistan under the tent and people will listen to your concerns."[136]

The Canadians assessed that there was some form of alliance between Sayyaf and the other fundamentalists to facilitate Taliban and Al Qaeda operations in the south of the country designed to shape the Constitutional Loya Jirga representative makeup through selective assassination long before the representatives even arrived in Kabul. Their objectives were to ensure that the constitution integrated Sharia and other Islamist principles. The greatest threat assessed, however, was Rabbani, Fahim Khan, Ismael Khan, Dostum, and Khalili, men who had "grown rich and very powerful under the current rules of the game…compounded by the lucrative drug trade and land grabbing schemes they have refined into an art form." The Constitutional Loya Jirga was a potential threat to their relative power. Iran and particularly Pakistan were considered potential threats as well, but they would probably act through intermediaries and proxies.[137]

Some threats were pre-empted in the run-up to the loya jirga. There were concerns in the international community that several second-tier Afghan military leaders in Kabul associated with the power brokers, men who received no media attention but who nevertheless wielded the ability to cause problems, might in fact do so before they lost their heavy weapons during the cantonment process. One was sent out of the country by President Karzai and another was sent to western Afghanistan to command a corps. Another was killed in a firefight during a narcotics interdiction operation launched by a Canadian ally, and a fourth was killed during a shoot-out at a road side checkpoint by another Canadian ally. The two deaths were coincidental, but "a variety of dark motives were ascribed to their deaths or postings" which was useful in the information operations realm. The message got out to the second tier AMF commanders that they were no longer below the radar and they should watch their step. Others higher up took note as well.[138]

3 RCR Battalion Group's plan for loya jirga security was Operation SILVERBACK, which covered a number of activities. LCol Denne surged November Company into PD 5 on 2 December 2003 to disrupt and dislocate the Sayyaf organization, while Charles Company visited the loya jirga site for a recce. There were ongoing problems with Sayyaf's bodyguards throughout this period. On numerous occasions, these individuals threatened Canadian soldiers, going so far as to tell one patrol commander that "When we have the power we will do to you like we did to the Russians and make you leave." LCol Denne stepped up the vehicle checkpoints and vowed he wasn't going to put up with any BS from Sayyaf.[139] Operation SILVERBACK continued with a company-level surge into PD 3 on 8 December. Then November Company went into both PD 3 and PD 5 and maintained an enhanced presence. The pressure on Sayyaf was on and the message was clear.

On 15 December, ISAF got several threat warnings of an impending rocket attack on the city. 3 RCR increased patrols in Chahar Asiab in response. Then November Company received human intelligence that three villages in the western area contained armed men. That night, a German patrol rumbled a rocket launch party and engaged six insurgents. The following morning several rockets hit downtown Kabul, but none exploded.[140] The Constitutional Loya Jirga started off with a bang.

The next day, one of the ARTHUR radars picked up a mortar track. There were two explosions – one near the parking site and another near the Ministry of Education. Then, out of the blue (or perhaps not), a demolition crew arrived at the refugee camp in PD 7, escorted by a platoon of police. The crowd confronted the crew and a Canadian patrol convinced the police not to escalate the situation. Someone was trying to take advantage of the focus on the loya jirga to seize land – or was someone trying to distract ISAF from loya jirga security? It was not clear. ISTAR Company increased its surveillance resources and MSTAR radars were deployed while F Battery fired illumination rounds randomly throughout the night. LUNA and TUAV sorties increased in the Canadian area of operations.[141]

Indications suggested that a militia commander who was resistant to DDR and connected to Sayyaf might pull something, so BGen Devlin 'dropped by for tea' one day, which was message enough. Still the threat warnings came in. Now word came through PD 7 police contacts that Camp Julien was the next target for a rocket attack along with the loya jirga site.

On 20 December 2003, 3 RCR launched Operation VALKYRIE designed in part to deter and pre-empt insurgent use of traditional rocket launch areas south and west of Camp Julien. VALKYRIE involved platoon- and company-sized night surges into these areas.[142] On 28 December, two suicide attacks were made against National Directorate of Security personnel, killing six of its members. One of these men was the leader of the counterterrorism unit.[143]

As the loya jirga sessions progressed, it became increasingly evident that this was an Afghan process – not a Western process, not an international community process, and not a UN process. These last three groupings of nations facilitated the event, created the conditions that permitted it to take place in a relatively coercion-free environment, and hoped for the best. There are no indications that there was any substantial outside interference or direct manipulation by the principle coalition nations, despite what the critics asserted.[144]

Of the issues at stake, some had long-term effects on Afghanistan during the Canadian Army's tenure in that country. The first was the problem of keeping the Pashtuns involved in the process. In a very general sense, the Taliban were seen to be a Pashtun movement supported by the majority of Pashtuns and Pakistan, while the Northern Alliance, despite their inter-factional problems, saw themselves as victors in the civil war and thus the spoils were rightfully theirs. This was not fully accurate – there were numerous anti-Taliban Pashtun tribes and as many Northern Alliance commanders who would change sides if enough money was on the table. The reality was that there was a sense of growing Pashtun alienation that had to be staved off at the Constitutional Loya Jirga if the Afghan Transitional Administration was to extend its influence in the south. That meant that the future constitution had to have the right power-sharing balance not only in numbers but also in mechanisms. Moreover, that was where the friction in the loya jirga lay: how much power should a Pashtun president have over the other 'victorious' ethnic groups? The process and its results were imperfect, but they were probably as perfect as they could get given the circumstances extant in December 2003.

As the Canadian soldiers and their Afghan counterparts continued to patrol and kept watch in the cold Kabul hills and alleyways throughout late December, the Afghan people and their leaders debated their future. On the night of 31 December 2003, Dr. Sibghatullah Mojadedi announced that most of the discrepancies in the reconciled constitution text had been solved and that a negotiating group had been formed to sort out what remained.

ENDNOTES

1. Roy Gutman, *How We Missed the Story: Osama Bin Laden, the Taliban, and the Hijacking of Afghanistan* (Washington DC: US Institute For Peace, 2008), Ch. 2 and 3.
2. Human Rights Watch, *Blood-Stained Hands: Past Atrocities in Kabul and Afghanistan's Legacy of Impunity* (Human Rights Watch, 2005).
3. Richard Miniter, *Mastermind: The Many Faces of the 9/11 Architect, Khalid Shaikh Mohammad* (New York: Sentinel Books, 2011), Ch. 3.
4. See Human Rights Watch, *Blood-Stained Hands.*
5. Karzai's Mujahideen lineage was to the royalist faction in the 1980s, not the fundamentalists, and he was Deputy Foreign Minister in 1992. See Berntsen, *Jawbreaker,* p. 81.
6. Sean M. Maloney, "The International Security Assistance Force: The Origins of a Stabilization Force," *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol 4 No.2.
7. Interview with LCol Dyrald Cross (Kandahar, 13 August 2008).
8. Briefing to the author by MGen Peter Devlin, "Task Force Kabul Roto 0 (Operation ATHENA)" (Ottawa, 13 June 2009).
9. Initially the Arthur radars on their BV tracked chassis were part of ISTAR Company but were sent over to the guns after a month of operation.
10. Interview with Major Dyrald Cross (Kandahar, 13 August 2008).
11. Briefing to the author by MGen Peter Devlin (Ottawa, 13 June 2009). Op ARTEMIS and its relationship with the Canadian contingent was contentious in that the Canadian commanders in Kabul believed that the SOF, with its separate reporting chain, was being used by the DCDS to spy on them like commissars.
12. This would only change with the creation of Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command in 2005-2006. Then CEFCOM started to micromanage operations from Ottawa instead of the DCDS. At least CEFCOM was two steps removed from the civilian bureaucracy instead of one….
13. In November 2003, Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A) was established as the U.S-led, coalition headquarters for Afghanistan. CTJF-180 was restructured as a subordinate organization of CFC-A. CFC-A reported in turn to CENTCOM. Under CJTF-180 and later CFC-A, the corps-level overall headquarters, a division-level headquarters supervising fighting brigades was maintained in Afghanistan.
14. DCDS, COS J3, "Memorandum of Understanding CINCNORTH and COMUSCENTCOM Concerning ISAF under NATO Leadership in Afghanistan" (22 August 2003).
15. Message, Warning Order Op ATHENA Roto One (29 August 2003).
16. Briefing to the author by MGen Peter Devlin (Ottawa, 13 June 2009).
17. Ibid.
18. "KMNB Campaign Plan," Leslie Papers.
19. Interview with LGen Andrew Leslie (Ottawa, 14 March 2007); Briefing to the author by MGen Peter Devlin (Ottawa, 13 June 2009).
20. Letter Leslie to Labbé (29 October 2003).
21. CF Fact Sheet, "Op ACCIUS."

22. This section was based on after-action material provided to the author by BGen Chris Thurrott and from the author's observations in-theatre.

23. Ibid.

24. Briefing, "Op ATHENA 3 RCR Bn Gp Army Lessons Learned Centre/Peace Support Training Centre, 1 December 2003"; Briefing, "Op ATHENA Roto 0 3 RCR Bn Gp briefing to LCol J.B.S. Roy 10 February 2004."

25. Briefing, "Op ATHENA Roto 0 3 RCR Bn Gp briefing to LCol J.B.S. Roy 10 February 2004."

26. Ibid.

27. Discussions with LGen Andrew Leslie; Interview with BGen Jocelyn Lacroix (Ottawa, 15 March 2010).

28. CA JTFSWA NCE J2 Daily Int SITREP (11 August 2003).

29. TFK Op ATHENA NCE SITREP (31 August 2003); TFK Op ATHENA NCE SITREP (27 August 2003).

30. Briefing, "Op ATHENA Roto 0 3 RCR Bn Gp briefing to LCol J.B.S. Roy 10 February 2004."

31. TFK Op ATHENA NCE SITREP (5 September 2003); HQ KMNB SITREP (6 September 2003); HQ KMNB SITREP (7 September 2003); TFK Op ATHENA NCE SITREP (10 September 2003); HQ KMNB SITREP (11 September 2003); Briefing, "Op ATHENA Roto 0 3 RCR Bn Gp briefing to LCol J.B.S. Roy 10 February 2004"; HQ KMNB SITREP (11 September 2003); HQ KMNB SITREP (13 September 2003).

32. HQ KMNB SITREP (6 September 2003); HQ KMNB SITREP (7 September 2003).

33. Cross interview; HQ KMNB SITREP (5 September 2003).

34. Cross interview; HQ KMNB SITREP (9 September 2003); ISAF HQ SITREP (11 September 2003).

35. TFK Op ATHENA NCE SITREP (11 September 2003); Message Comd NCE to NDCC (11 September 2003). The ARTHUR radars were leased and there were concerns in Ottawa that too much money would be spent on maintenance if they were operating all of the time. Therefore they were not. Comd TFK SITREP Number 2, Week of 11 to 17 August 2003 (17 August 2003).

36. Trembley to DL, "Arthur Counter-Battery Radar" (23 February 2004).

37. Leslie interview; Comd TFK SITREP Number 6, Week of 8 to 14 September 2003 (15 September 2003); Comd TFK SITREP Number 7, Week of 15 to 21 September 2003 (22 September 2003).

38. Anthony Shaffer, *Operation DARK HEART* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2010), p. 81.

39. Comd TFK SITREP Number 7, Week of 15 to 21 September 2003 (22 September 2003).

40. Leslie interview.

41. Clearly some planner in KMNB HQ loved movies that dealt with coup themes. POWER PLAY was a 1978 film about a coup d'état in a third world country. The Canadian Army provided the Centurion tanks. Op VALKYRIE was another CONPLAN in Kabul.

42. Comd TFK SITREP Number 7, Week of 15 to 21 September 2003 (22 September 2003).

43. Cross interview.

44. Devlin interview.

45. HQ KMNB G3 Plans "Fragmentary Order (FRAGO) 013-Increased Force Protection Measures for Key Point" (L September 2003).

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.
48. Comd TFK SITREP Number 7, Week of 15 to 21 September 2003 (22 September 2003).
49. Lt Col Shaffer's assertion in *Operation DARK HEART* that ISAF forces did not constitute "combat power" and that the only combat power resided with CJTF-180 in Bagram (p. 82) is, clearly, incorrect.
50. Devlin interview.
51. HQ KMNB G3 Plans "Fragmentary Order (FRAGO) 013-Increased Force Protection Measures for Key Point" (L September 2003).
52. Leslie interview.
53. KMNB HQ SITREP (18 September 2003).
54. Comd TFK SITREP Number 1, Week of 3 to 12 August 2003 (10 August 2003). Barbara Stapleton, who worked with NGOs and the EU, contends that the Japanese would not release monies until Ministry of Defence reform was implemented. See "Disarming the Militias: DDR and DIAG and the Implications for Peace Building," in Markus Hakansson (ed), *Peacebuilding in Afghanistan*, at http://www.sak.se.
55. Comd TFK SITREP Number 2, Week of 11 to 17 August 2003 (17 August 2003).
56. Briefing Note, "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Integration (DDR) and Heavy Weapons Cantonment (HWC) in Kabul" (18 January 2004).
57. Leslie interview.
58. As detailed in Maloney, *Confronting the Chaos*.
59. Ibid.
60. Comd TFK SITREP Number 3, Week of 18 to 24 August 2003 (24 August 2003).
61. Graham interview; HQ ISAF SITREP (3 December 2003).
62. Memorandum Maclean to Maddison and Henault (24 October 2003).
63. HQ ISAF SITREP (11 September 2003); Bradley Graham *By His Own Rules: The Ambitions, Successes, and Ultimate Failures of Donald Rumsfeld* (New York: Public Affairs Books, 2009), p. 382.
64. Based on author's data collected from ISAF EOD in December 2004.
65. IEDs achieved saliency in the North American media and popular commentary in 2004, so much so that some analysts were concerned about Iraqi IED techniques 'migrating' to Afghanistan. They need not have worried. Note that sophisticated IEDs were in use in Afghanistan long before the United States-led coalition occupied Iraq by mid-2003 and were subjected to sustained insurgent attack later that year.
66. HQ KMNB SITREP (5 September 2003); HQ KMNB SITREP (6 September 2003); HQ ISAF SITREP (9 September 2003); HQ ISAF SITREP (23 September 2003); HQ ISAF SITREP (30 September 2003). Dangar was also involved in the 1992–1993 unpleasantness in Kabul and was considered to be a war criminal by human rights organizations. See *Blood-Stained Hands,* p. 52.
67. HQ KMNB SITREP (7 October 2003).
68. Comd TFK SITREP Number 4, Week of 25 to 31 August 2003 (31 August 2003).
69. David C. Isby, "Trojan Horse or Genuine Schism? The Hizb-i-islami Split," *Terrorism Monitor,* Vol 2 Issue 11 (2 June 2004).
70. HQ ISAF SITREP (29 September 2003).

71. Briefing, "Op ATHENA Roto 0 3 RCR Bn Gp briefing to LCol J.B.S. Roy 10 February 2004."
72. Memorandum Wadsworth to DCDS, "Briefing Note: Mine Strike 02 October 2003" (5 October 2003).
73. Leslie interview. Leslie papers, Letter Leslie to DCDS, "Jowz Valley Mine-Strike Board of Inquiry-Final Report."
74. TFK NCE SITREP (6 October 2003); HQ KMNB SITREP (29 October 2003).
75. This was called Op CAROUSEL.
76. Comd TFK SITREP Numbers 9 and 10, Weeks of 29 September to 12 October 2003 (13 October 2003).
77. HQ KMNB SITREP (7 October 2003).
78. HQ KMNB SITREP (14 October 2003).
79. Comd TFK SITREP Numbers 13, 14, and 15, Weeks of 27 October to 16 November 2003 (17 November 2003).
80. HQ KMNB SITREP (4 October 2003).
81. HQ KMNB SITREP (14 October 2003); HQ KMNB SITREP (15 October 2003).
82. Comd TFK SITREP Numbers 13, 14, and 15, Weeks of 27 October to 16 November 2003 (17 November 2003); HQ KMNB SITREP (14 November 2003).
83. Comd TFK SITREP Numbers 13, 14, and 15, Weeks of 27 October to 16 November 2003 (17 November 2003).
84. HQ ISAF SITREP (16 September 2003).
85. HQ ISAF SITREP (11 September 2003).
86. HQ ISAF SITREP (2 October 2003).
87. HQ ISAF SITREP (7 October 2003); HQ ISAF SITREP (13 October 2003).
88. Leslie interview.
89. HQ ISAF SITREP (27 October 2003).
90. HQ ISAF SITREP (16 December 2003).
91. Email Hitesman to DL, "Afghan National Army Military Training" (25 August 2003).
92. Comd TFK SITREP Number 4, Week of 25 to 31 August 2003 (31 August 2003).
93. Comd TFK SITREP Number 5, Week of 1 to 7 September 2003 (8 August 2003); Email thread M.G. Rompre to D NATO Pol, "Afghan National Army Military Training" (25 August 2003).
94. Memorandum from Leslie, "Embedded Training Team Coordination Meeting" (20 September 2003).
95. Email Comd NCE to DL, "Op PHOENIX Visit" (27 August 2003).
96. COS J3 to DCDS, "Comd TFK Support to ANA Training" (3 October 2003); Leslie to DL, "Commander TFK Guidance-Canadian Embedded Training Team" (12 October 2003).
97. Interview with Capt Mike Chagnon (Petawawa, 10 March 2010). See also Mike Chagnon, "CF Embedded Training Team Lessons Learned," *Canadian Army Journal* (Fall/Winter 2004), pp. 135-146.
98. Comd TFK SITREP Numbers 9 and 10, Weeks of 29 September to 12 October 2003 (13 October 2003).
99. Briefing, "Op ATHENA Roto 0 3 RCR Bn Gp briefing to LCol J.B.S. Roy 10 February 2004."
100. HQ ISAF SITREP (16 September 2003).
101. TFK NCE SITREP (19 September 2003).

102. Briefing, "Op ATHENA 3 RCR Bn Gp Army Lessons Learned Peace Support Training Centre 1 December 2003."
103. Telephone interview with the Minister of Defence Bill Graham (5 March 2010).
104. COS J3 and DCDS, "CIMIC and CIDA" (11 December 2003).
105. Comd TFK SITREP Number 4, Week of 25 to 31 August 2003 (31 August 2003).
106. Comd TFK SITREP Number 5, Week of 1 to 7 September 2003 (8 September 2003).
107. COS J3 to DCDS, "Op ATHENA 3 RCR BG CIMIC Projects List" (7 October 2003).
108. Comd TFK SITREP Numbers 9 and 10, Weeks of 29 September to 12 October 2003 (13 October 2003).
109. Comd TFK SITREP Number 11 and 12, Weeks of 13 October to 26 October 2003 (27 October 2003).
110. Comd TFK SITREP Numbers 13, 14, and 15, Weeks of 27 October to 16 November 2003 (17 November 2003).
111. Comd TFK SITREP Numbers 16 and 17, Weeks of 17 November to 15 December 2003 (4 January 2004).
112. COS J3 and DCDS, "CIMIC and CIDA" (11 December 2003).
113. Leslie interview; Devlin interview.
114. Leslie interview.
115. This was the Jack Idema case.
116. Leslie interview.
117. Comd TFK SITREP Numbers 16 and 17, Weeks of 17 November to 15 December 2003 (4 January 2004).
118. Comd TFK SITREP Numbers 16 and 17, Weeks of 17 November to 15 December 2003 (4 January 2004); HQ ISAF SITREP (3 December 2003).
119. TFK NCE SITREPS (20 November 2003, 25 November 2003, 28 November 2003, 29 November 2003, 8 December 2003).
120. This problem was first noted during the Oka Crisis when an RCMP helicopter equipped with a Wescam camera system fed imagery in real time to FMC HQ. The FMC commander in turn used this new capability to tell a company commander over a cell phone that he didn't like how one of his platoons was deployed, thus jumping down four levels of the chain of command on a trivial issue.
121. Cross interview. See also Chris W. Johnson, "Act in Haste, Repent at Leisure: An Overview of Operational Incidents involving UAV's in Afghanistan."
122. This faction did not want to deploy Aurora patrol aircraft with their camera systems to Afghanistan either and apparently were incapable of conceiving of missions that didn't involve hunting Soviet submarines that weren't there anymore. Note that the Americans and British forces deployed maritime patrol aircraft as ISTAR platforms in Afghanistan, in addition to a variety of UAVs.
123. Comd TFK SITREP Numbers 9 and 10, Weeks of 29 September to 12 October 2003 (13 October 2003); HQ ISAF SITREP (6 December 2003).
124. Comd TFK SITREP Numbers 9 and 10, Weeks of 29 September to 12 October 2003 (13 October 2003); Maloney, *Confronting the Chaos*.
125. Comd TFK SITREP Number 8, Week of 22 to 28 September 2003 (30 September 2003).
126. Comd TFK SITREP Number 11 and 12, Weeks of 13 October to 26 October 2003 (27 October 2003).
127. HQ ISAF SITREP (11 November 2003).

128. Comd TFK SITREP Numbers 13, 14, and 15, Weeks of 27 October to 16 November 2003 (17 November 2003).
129. HQ ISAF SITREP (14 November 2003).
130. Ibid.
131. HQ ISAF SITREP (26 November 2003).
132. Comd TFK SITREP Number 3, Week of 18 to 24 August 2003 (24 August 2003).
133. Cornelia Schneider, "Striking a Balance in Post-Conflict Constitution-Making: Lessons from Afghanistan for the International Community" *Peace, Conflict and Development*, Vol. 7 (July 2005), pp. 174-215.
134. The circular logic here is intentional.
135. Devlin interview.
136. Leslie interview.
137. Comd TFK SITREP Numbers 16 and 17, Weeks of 17 November to 15 December 2003 (4 January 2004).
138. Leslie interview.
139. TFK NCE SITREP (4 December 2003); H KMNB SITREP (2 December 2003).
140. HQ KMNB SITREP (16 December 2003).
141. HQ KMNB SITREP (17 December 2003).
142. HQ KMNB SITREP (18 December 2003); HQ KMNB SITREP (19 December 2003).
143. Based on author's data collected from ISAF EOD in December 2004.
144. Specifically, Schneider in "Striking a Balance in Post-Conflict Constitution-Making: Lessons from Afghanistan for the International Community," who asserts that there was "no deployment of international military personnel to protect the process and no special Afghan police or army units [that had] been trained." Clearly this is inaccurate.

DECREASINGLY CALM BUT COMPARATIVELY STABLE:

OPERATION ATHENA IN KABUL, JANUARY-AUGUST 2004

The Canadian Army's role in ISAF Kabul operations in 2004 built on the solid foundations established in the last half of 2003. For the most part, the critical issues relating to the immediate survival of the Afghan Transitional Administration followed by the drive to attain political consensus amongst the power brokers and avoid civil war were addressed by Operation ATHENA Roto 0 – and not without cost. Roto 1 continued to implement and monitor the heavy weapons cantonment projects and became engaged in the voter registration and elections security operations so critical to ensuring that the Constitutional Loya Jirga would remain successful over the long term. Roto 2 and 3, operating in a "residual capacity," continued to provide highly capable resources for KMNB security operations in order to make the capital a safer place. All the while, the Canadian ETT made every effort to improve the capacity of the Afghan Army. At the same time, there were serious problems in the international community's ability to coordinate a myriad of efforts to assist the Afghan people in the face of growing threats. Once again, the Canadian Army's central position in many of the processes paid off in attempts to harmonize coalition strategy.

The Conclusion of the Constitutional Loya Jirga

On the night of 31 December 2003, Dr. Mojadedi announced that there was tentative agreement among the parties. To ensure that entities did not generate violence, 3 RCR mounted several simultaneous Operation VALKYRIE surges into western Kabul and quintupled the number of Operation LURKER patrols. The drama at the loya jirga continued the next day, with the Rabbani and Sayyaf factions threatening to boycott a vote on the constitution so that they could demonstrate strength on ethnic issues related to Pashtun representation and presidential power. 3 RCR and ISTAR Company then mounted Operation MAVERICK, a company-level surge into PD 14 which was, not coincidentally, Sayyaf territory. MAVERICK was ostensibly designed to deter criminal activity but what constituted criminal activity could, of course, be broadly defined.[1]

With 48% of the delegates boycotting the vote, the Constitutional Loya Jirga adjourned until 3 January 2004. The sticking point was the number of vice-presidents and whether or not Afghans of dual nationality could become ministers. This last problem reflected a schism that emerged after the collapse of the Taliban between Afghans that left the country either during the Soviet period or the Taliban period and then returned in 2002, and those that stayed and fought. Those that had left were viewed with some disdain. In some cases, there was a difference in the educational level of each group. Western-educated Afghans that returned ran into sometimes illiterate ex-Mujahideen that were not afraid to use violence to achieve objectives. However, if international investment in the reconstruction process was going to take place, a bureaucracy was needed. On another level, this boycott was directed against specific personalities in the Afghan Transitional Administration who were clearly in the way of individual agendas clothed in ethnic robes.

Lakhdar Brahimi was brought in to help break up the logjam. Francesc Vendrell from the European Union joined him and worked with Mojadedi to find a solution. The loya jirga lurched forward once again and on 3 January Mojadedi announced that there was agreement on the constitution between all parties. The Constitutional Loya Jirga wound down over the next four days as delegates lingered at the site. Operation SILVERBACK also wound down and 3 RCR and ISTAR Company shifted their resources elsewhere.

Afghanistan now had a constitution, and for the first time since 1974, the population's representatives, be they political, ethnic, or religious, had the basis for a state that was something other than scientific socialism or Islamic fundamentalism. Contrary to the critics, this process was an Afghan process and every effort had been made to take into account all sources of power and influence in the country. The UN facilitated the process and a combination of Afghan and coalition forces protected it. Attempts to intimidate delegates, in the broadest sense, were thwarted by the security effort in Kabul. Most importantly, the process and its protective measures were seen to be an Afghan process – and communicated as such through the media.

The Constitutional Loya Jirga was a legitimate process with a legitimate result, endorsed by the international community. To ensure that the level of legitimacy was retained, however, two things had to happen. First, the Afghan Transitional Administration had to be replaced with an elected government at the national and provincial levels. Second, the government had to have a functioning bureaucracy in order to ensure that the resources needed for reconstruction could be obtained from the international community and distributed to where they were needed. And that was the back story for the next three years of Canadian involvement in Afghanistan. How exactly does a technologically advanced nation and its allies effectively assist a fledgling nation emerging from a near post-apocalyptic environment, especially when there are people willing to kill themselves on behalf of others, or even God, to stop it?

KMNB Operations Continue

3 RCR Battalion Group and ISTAR Company switched back to security operations in their respective areas of operation. During the loya jirga operations, a number of Key Entry Points (KEPs) were identified around the city. Working with the Kabul City Police, ISAF units conducted snap vehicle checkpoint searches in the vicinity of these entry points. These operations were deemed successful in deterring a variety of anti-government activities, so the KEPs were institutionalized and designated using letters. Once the CIMIC Platoon went in and talked to local leaders, Canadian engineers built infrastructure at the KEPs for the police and laid out traffic control measures.[2] Joint vehicle checkpoints were then conducted between 3 RCR, ISTAR Company, and the police. This coalesced as Operation ROME.[3] (See Figure 5-1)

One of the KEPs, Echo, was located just outside the ISAF area of operations between Wardak province and Paghman district. The Kabul City Police liked this area because of the constricted terrain, which made it easier to control incoming traffic. When 3 RCR sought DCDS permission through the NCE to conduct Operation ROME tasks at KEP Echo, however, they were rebuffed. Here was an entry point on a route known to sustain opposition activity, but because it lay just on the other side of an artificial line, ISAF could not support the police.[4]

Operation ROME had to continue at other KEPs. Some concerns were raised about the viability of some of the police in certain districts, specifically that police were using the KEPs to shake down citizens. ISTAR Company was tasked to conduct Operation SMOKEY and place covert surveillance on the KEPs to ascertain if this was true and if so, let the Kabul Chief of Police know what was going on.[5]

The first iteration of Operation GONDOLA took place in a media frenzy on 15 January 2004. Operation GONDOLA was Canadian support to the heavy weapons cantonment programme. The significance of artillery in Kabul was symbolic on many levels. The misuse of artillery against the civilian population by the factions in the 1992-1993 fighting imprinted itself in public memory. As a result, one of the first Afghan militia organizations to be cantoned was 88 Artillery Brigade. 3 RCR, supported by ISTAR Company and the NCE, escorted 24 large caliber guns, 13 small caliber guns, three multiple-rocket launch systems, and 10 armoured fighting vehicles from their positions to the Rash Lahore cantonment site in Chahar Asiab district. Another convoy consisted of 11 multiple-rocket launchers, 27 pieces of artillery, and even anti-tank guided missile systems. GONDOLA was mounted with maximum media coverage and information operations support from ISAF HQ – very deliberately. These cantonments constituted a message to all players that the programme was serious and was no longer just talk. Cantonment was now underway and the momentum was about to build up. The message was: there would be no more factional armies reporting to unelected power brokers.[6]

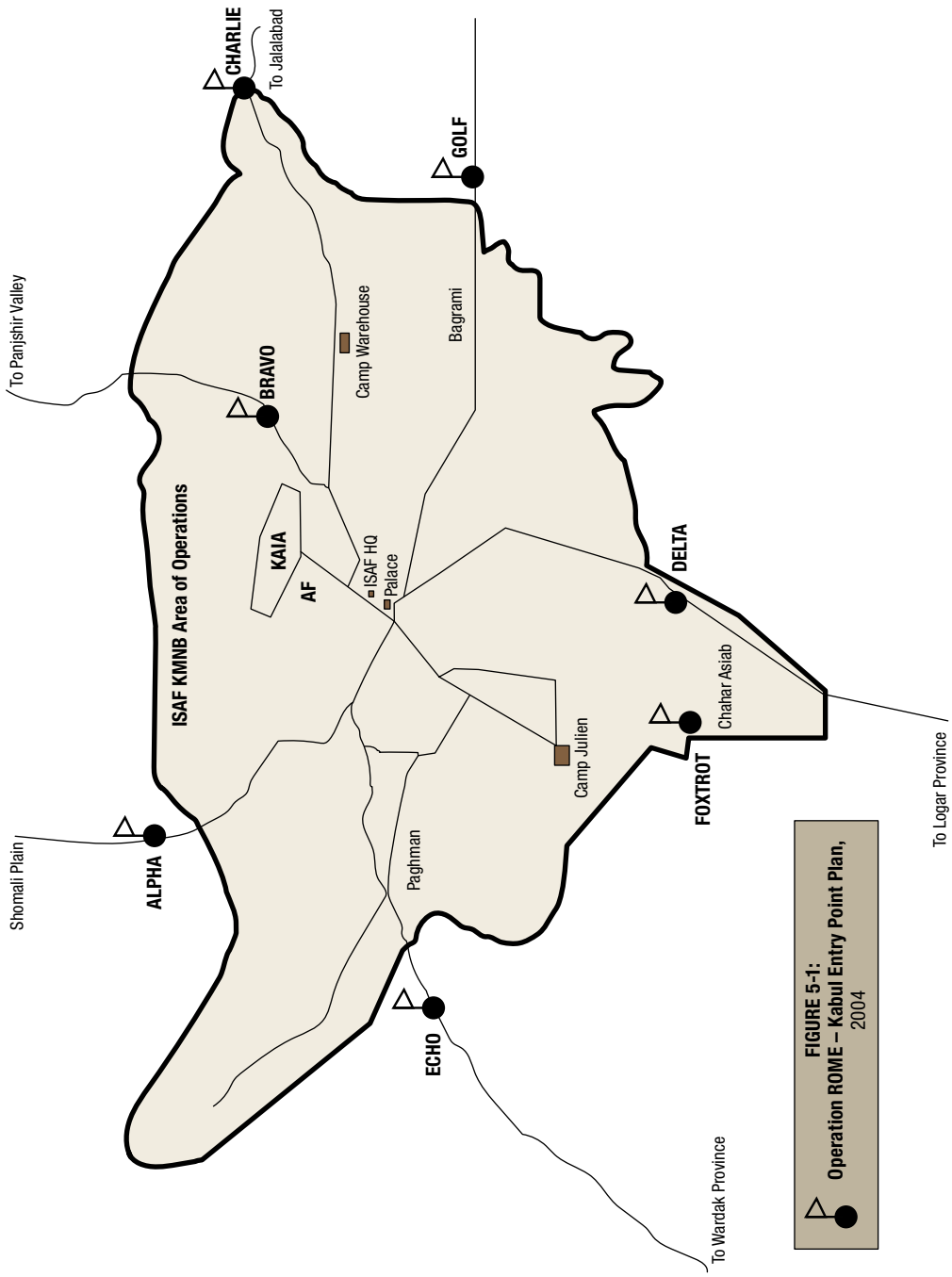


Figure 5-1: Operation ROME – Kabul Entry Point Plan, 2004

Photo Credit: DND KA2004-R103-1273d

The Canadian International Security Assistance Force contingent in Kabul worked closely with the Kabul police in the western districts of the city. The police slowly evolved from an untrained militia to a force capable to conducting counter-terrorism operations alongside ISAF.

3 RCR Battalion Group and ISTAR Company developed information that a compound in PD 7 was being used to support HiG activity. After the Short/Beerenfenger killings, anything HiG-related was high priority for 3 RCR, so a plan was formulated to use the Kabul City Police as the 'knock.' Operation TSUNAMI was mounted on 18 January 2004 and led to the apprehension of HiG personnel whose information was exploited against other HiG cells, some of which were involved in narco-trafficking.[7] Another target then popped up on the scope on 25 January and 3 RCR prepared Operation WHIRLWIND to apprehend him. Working with the National Directorate of Security, two raids were conducted in the Canadian area of operations that netted three terrorists, including Abdul Maruf, and a substantial cache of weapons. CIMIC Platoon deployed to handle effects mitigation in the neighbourhoods.[8]

Suicide Attacks: The Murphy Killing and its Aftermath, 27 January 2004

Two Iltis vehicles with six soldiers departed Camp Julien, and headed for a CIMIC meeting at Kabul City Police Headquarters. Less than two kilometres from the Canadian camp on Route GREEN, a civilian vehicle flashed its lights and alerted an ambush party that an ISAF patrol was headed their way. The patrol slowed down to pass through a small ditch. As the first Iltis moved through and out, the second vehicle slowed down. A man carrying two 76mm projectiles strapped to him walked up beside the second Iltis and detonated his bomb just feet from the front of the vehicle. Cpl Jamie Murphy was killed instantly and three other Canadians were wounded. One Afghan civilian died and nine were wounded. A QRF column including a Bison ambulance and a mobile recovery team secured the site and evacuated the casualties.[9]

While TF KABUL reeled from the shock of the attack, a British patrol accompanying an Estonian EOD team down Route Violet was bombed the next day with a suicide vehicle-borne IED. This attack killed a British soldier and seriously wounded three British and two Estonians. There was a pattern: both attacks were in the morning, both were suicide bombings and both stricken vehicles were open-topped, soft-skinned vehicles operating on regularly patrolled and travelled ISAF main service routes.[10] There was a threat warning of another suicide attack targeted against Kabul airport, but nothing happened – five explosions were heard south of the civilian terminal.[11] It is probable that Operation WHIRLWIND prevented or otherwise interfered with that attack in some way.

This was the third suicide attack conducted in Kabul since the German bus bombing and the first against a Canadian target. There was no confusion, no ambiguity this time. This was a deliberate act conducted by an individual with the express purpose of killing and maiming. The question in Afghanistan, of course, was why. And, as with the Jowz Valley attack, there was no easy answer. Outright terrorism to degrade ISAF capability, fair enough, that was understandable; the common link was ISAF, but was it 'messaging'? If so, what was the message? If it was retaliatory in nature, there were several recent possible reasons that ISAF staff had to consider. First, it could have been HiG retaliating for the severe takedown of its networks in Kabul, but HiG did not tend toward suicide bombing at this point in the war. Second, it could have been messaging related to heavy weapons cantonment or retaliation for Operation POWER PLAY. It was probably not loya jirga-related, or the attack would have been conducted during the event. One theory was that Al Qaeda and the Taliban were tired of HiG failures and came in to show them how to do the job properly. And, as before, some complex combination of reasons may have been behind the attacks. There was circumstantial information linking two key anti-Taliban personalities in Kabul with the mullah who provided a safe house to the bomber the night before the attack, but there was no street-level "chatter" after the Murphy killing as there had been after the Short/Beerenfenger killings.[12]

Photo Credit: Author

The Cold War-era jeep, the Iltis, reached the limits of its capability in Kabul in 2003. Suicide IED attacks against open, 'soft' vehicles were responsible for the deaths of several International Security Assistance Force troops, including Canadians. The decision was made to dispose of these vehicles in 2004.

In-bound Canadian C-130s carrying BGen Jocelyn Lacroix and his replacement staff for KMNB were diverted to Bagram Air Field. In another incident, a Coyote rolled over, trapping two soldiers, which generated another QRF from Camp Julien. The KMNB alert state went red. Non-armoured vehicles were restricted in their movements – Canadian B echelon vehicles like medium and heavy logistics vehicles wheeled trucks, were not permitted to leave their locations. The two infantry companies riding around in Iltis were also restricted – there were only so many Bison armoured personnel carriers to go around and it was fortunate that LCol Denne was insistent that more be brought into theatre after the Short/Beerenfenger killings. This left the LAV III Company as the only organization that could get out and about in the Canadian area of operations. CIMIC and psychological operations ground to a halt, no projects could be done. Patrolling was restricted. It took several days to get B vehicles back to Camp Julien. In time, the electrical and mechanical engineers from the NSE worked night and day to modify the trucks with up-armour kits after a technical assistance visit made its recommendations.[13]

The two attacks had immediate negative effects on KMNB and its units' ability to operate in the city. Some of these effects lasted a week, while others had more long-term impact. The plan to use ISAF forces to work with election officials and identify voter registration sites for the 2004 elections was now delayed. Most importantly, President Karzai removed the head of the NDS, Engineer Muhammad Arif Sarwari.

The attacks forced 3 RCR to refocus their resources on force protection. Operation HYDRA was established to monitor Route Green. The pending redeployment of Roto 0 and the influx of Roto 1 meant that even more resources, including those from ISTAR Company, would be employed in protecting troop convoys travelling from Camp Julien all the way to Kabul Afghanistan International Airport and back. All in all, 3 RCR's work in West Kabul, let alone the western districts, was curtailed, including CIMIC activities. LCol Denne's ability to mount robust patrolling, and to message the population and the enemy was equally threatened. At the same time, the vehicle off road rate for ISTAR Company's Coyotes dramatically increased into February, which also affected surveillance coverage. The Royal Canadian Dragoons Coyotes were wearing out and the NSE mechanics worked endlessly to keep them going in the austere and dusty Kabul environment.[14]

Photo Credit: DND KA2004-R102-075a

The decision to dispose of the Iltis resulted in the acquisition of the Light Utility Vehicle Wheeled, better known as the G Wagon. The G Wagons served in both Kabul and Kandahar.

Re-thinking Explosive Ordnance and Improvised Explosive Device Disposal Operations

The two different types of attacks against 3 RCR forced a re-examination of how the Canadian Army looked at EOD and counter-IED capabilities. Culturally, ammunition technicians handled ordnance disposal and worked for a logistics battalion, while combat engineers handled mine clearance and worked for field squadrons. There was significantly increased overlap between the two tasks in Afghanistan and, with the introduction of the IED threat, there had to be some form of rapprochement and deconfliction.[15]

The engineer squadron for both Roto 0 and Roto 1 possessed mine clearance and EOD equipment. For the most part, these were several systems acquired for stabilization operations in Bosnia and Kosovo. The Marion Mine Flail was a light tractor-based system that was underpowered. There was another vehicle that pushed a Pearson scatterable munitions clearance device (basically a plough); it was equipped with a forward-looking infrared system and a magnetic detector system. Later on, two remotely piloted M-113s equipped with Pearson rollers replaced these vehicles. As well, two Nyalas (mine-resistant South African vehicles with V-shaped hulls) were used to "prove" routes by driving along them until they hit something. Three Vanguard Mk 1 light EOD robots were also deployed, loaded in specially equipped Bison armoured personnel carriers. None of these systems were designed to deal with IEDs: they were used to clear unexploded ordnance and mines in a relatively permissive environment.[16]

It took some time for the Canadian Forces to react to the new threats and move away from the damage caused by post-Cold War cuts to Canadian EOD capability and the 1990s emphasis on peace support operations.[17] Two months after the Murphy killing, the policy level in Ottawa finally accepted that "Anti-ISAF elements have attained a level of technological sophistication that has not previously been encountered by Canadian Forces troops on operations." This technological sophistication centred on the detonation systems associated with IED. Therefore, technological means had to be found to interfere with those systems. This meant the acquisition and deployment of electronic countermeasure (ECM) systems.[18]

ECM at the ground tactical level was not new; the British Army had employed ECM in Northern Ireland since the 1980s. Canadian EOD personnel used low-power ECM during ordnance disposal operations as a matter of course and had done so for many years before Afghanistan. The Americans first encountered radio-controlled IEDs in Afghanistan in 2002 and initially had no means of dealing with them. The U.S. Navy had stocks of obsolete jamming systems from the Cold War; these were modified for use in American vehicles and the system was code-named ACORN. The process from identification of the problem to deployment of the ACORN system took three months.[19]

Photo Credit: Author

The Telerob explosive ordnance disposal and observation robot, seen here nestled in the back of a Bison armoured personnel carrier, was employed by Canadian personnel in Kabul in the fight against improvised explosive devices, unexploded explosive ordnance, and mines.

Photo Credit: DND IS2004-0665a

The improvised explosive device and mine threat in Kabul and later in Kandahar led to the deployment of Nyala route-proving vehicles from Canadian units in Bosnia. Nyalas led the way on International Security Assistance Force and later Provincial Reconstruction Team convoys in remote areas.

It was clear to some that ECM would have to be introduced throughout the force. This was technically challenging, especially when ECM had to be deconflicted with the Signals Squadron and its operations, the electronic warfare people, and so on. A meeting of minds was required between the engineer community and the signals community back in Canada as well as in theatre to prevent radio frequency spectrum 'fratricide.' Acquisition of the right systems, in the right numbers, and through what amounted to a peacetime defence acquisition process was equally challenging. Canada was already behind the curve on the anti-IED war and had to catch up.

Nouveau Sheriff in Town: Operation ATHENA Roto 1 Arrives

The transition from Operation ATHENA Roto 0 to Roto 1 took place in early February 2004. MGen Andrew Leslie stepped down as DComd ISAF. By this time, serious lobbying on Canada's part paid off and Canada gained command of ISAF. LGen Rick Hillier took over from Lt Gen Gliemeroth.[20]

Command of KMNB was retained by Canada and passed from BGen Peter Devlin to BGen Jocelyn Lacroix. Maj Dyrald Cross handed over ISTAR Company to Maj Andrew "Z" Zdunich and the *12e Régiment blindé du Canada* (12 RBC) Recce Squadron. LCol Don Denne's 3 RCR Battalion Group was replaced with LCol Stephane Roy's *3e Bataillon du Royal 22e Régiment* (3eR22eR). R Battery from *5e Régiment d'artillerie légère du Canada* (5 RALC) replaced F Battery. The new NSE commander was LCol Serge Carignan with the bulk of the new staff arriving from 5e Brigade units in Quebec. 52e Escadron, 5e *Régiment du génie de combat* (RGC) became the force engineers.

The most important difference in the Roto 1 command and control relationships was the amplification of the TF KABUL commander's role. LGen Hillier was Commander ISAF, but not double-hatted as the Canadian contingent commander as MGen Leslie had been. Col Alain Tremblay was the contingent commander for Roto 1. His predecessor for Roto 0, Col Mark Hodgson, had been the deputy contingent commander with a smaller staff. The commander's staffs were beefed up as well – LCol Sylvain Sirois became the Chief of Staff. There were a number of reasons for this significant change. The CDS, General Ray Henault, was concerned that any incident involving Canadian troops in Afghanistan might have negative effects on the pending national elections in Canada and sought to limit the possibility of that happening. This view was expressed to the task force commander through the DCDS, who was already placing limits on Canadian Army activities in Afghanistan back in 2001.[21]

Photo Credit: DND KA2003-A407D

LGen Rick Hillier took over as Commander International Security Assistance Force. Hillier was forced to rely on non-Canadian troops in Kabul because of increased concern over potential Canadian casualties.

Additionally, elements in NDHQ and elsewhere did not like MGen Leslie's relative autonomy and/or how he used it and sought to curtail that autonomy for commanders in subsequent rotations. Others in the new headquarters disagreed with the concept of operations as it had evolved in 2003 and thought that DDR/heavy weapons cantonment, the ETT and the 'night work' were things that the Canadians should not necessarily be doing because they were, in their view, politically risky. In retrospect, these views reflected an insular, limited-liability "peacekeeping" mentality from the 1990s that was not in tune with the realities of the situation on the ground in Kabul. In effect, the headquarters became, according to LCol Sirois, "DCDS forward."[22] The TF KABUL commander's brief, as summed up by Col Tremblay, was to protect Canadian interests, not necessarily to ensure tactical success.[23]

The new command relationships posed significant problems for Canadian and ISAF operations in Kabul. There were new mechanisms put in place at the TF Kabul HQ to vet all non-framework operations conducted by Canadian troops in Kabul. An Operations Board was established at the headquarters for that function. Only after that board made a positive recommendation would a request be sent back to the DCDS and then the CDS for approval. Neither the new Commander ISAF nor the new Commander KMNB liked having their autonomy limited by this bureaucratic process.[24]

There were also disagreements on force structure that ultimately were aggravated by the new processes. For example, there were two schools of thought in the mounting organizations in Canada relating to Recce Squadron as Roto 1 worked out its structure in the fall of 2003 prior to deployment. One school of thought held that all Canadian sub-units needed to be commanded by the battalion and that the force should not be divided. The other school of thought was that Recce Squadron was a brigade resource and should be commanded and employed by the brigade headquarters.[25] This was not a new doctrinal problem, as seen with Operation APOLLO, and was a legacy issue from the Army's Stabilization Force rotations in Bosnia. Manning of the battalion group was based on Recce Squadron being part of it and when it was employed elsewhere, this caused problems as the infantry battalion didn't bring its recce platoon along. Similarly, no one thought to man the force properly to continue the ETT task.

The manning cap imposed by the Ottawa process produced a situation where force employers and force generators fought over what amounted to 10 or 20 personnel slots here and five or 10 there. Each corps or branch had its doctrinal structures and when those were modified (that is, reduced in all cases) to fit into the cap, it generated competition, almost all of which was unhealthy. These disagreements emerged during training and, when coupled to the new command arrangements, escalated into personality conflicts between the Canadian commanders, which in turn had a negative impact on Canadian operations in Kabul.

For the most part, the battalion group, ISTAR Company, KMNB HQ and troops, the National Command and National Support Elements were all structurally similar to the previous rotation. The All Source Intelligence Centre was removed from KMNB and made a Canadian national asset under the NCE. This was done ostensibly because of complexities related to handling intelligence material not releasable to other NATO countries.

The new rotation was not manned to handle the Embedded Training Team mission and it took some weeks to convince Ottawa to deploy the additional 20 personnel necessary to replace the first iteration of that task. TF KABUL neglected to tell TF Phoenix that the ETTs were not scheduled to be replaced in Roto 1. "We are getting outstanding 'bang for the buck' in this endeavour," Col Tremblay explained to Ottawa. "To get out of this commitment would give a black eye to Canada." The new Commander ISAF, LGen Hillier, who also saw the positive benefits of maintaining the exceptional work done by the previous rotation, supported Tremblay in this. The new personnel eventually arrived in late February 2004 and set out mentoring a kandak from the Afghan National Army's 1st Brigade.[26]

Kabul Multinational Brigade and ISTAR Company Operations

When Maj Andrew Zdunich arrived and commenced operations, only 30% of his vehicles were functioning and none of the TUAV launchers were working – the TUAV troop was waiting for one airframe to be brought in from France.[27] 12 RBC's patrolling was initially limited to Operation BASEBALL, the Route INDIGO surveillance task, where to Coyotes worked alongside R Battery's forward observation officer/forward air controller teams keeping "eyes on" that vital route. ISTAR Company looked toward establishing an observation post in downtown Kabul (Operation OLYMPUS) as there had been rockets fired at the critical installations sited on TV Hill. For the most part, ISTAR Company continued with the same tasks its predecessor organization conducted.

KMNB received some new units. The German CH-53 helicopter detachment moved up to Konduz to support the German PRT and a Turkish UH-60 detachment replaced it.[28] The Dutch allocated six AH-64 Apache attack helicopters to ISAF in Kabul – their firepower, ability to respond quickly, and surveillance capabilities were a welcome addition to the effort. In another development, Slovenia approached Canada to 'nest' a light reconnaissance platoon with Recce Squadron. This was approved and the Hummer-mounted platoon arrived, bedded down in Camp Julien, and commenced patrolling in May.

Direct action became a mainstay of ISAF operations as the terrorist threat continued throughout 2004. The enemy operation of choice was the IED attack, either suicide or radio-commanded (with almost no victim-operated attacks – yet). There were rocket

attacks, but it was never clear if these were all insurgency-based or not. Very rarely was there a direct fire ambush. As a result, a premium was placed on ISTAR Company and the ASIC with their connections to allied agencies in providing timely information on enemy networks. And then those networks had to be taken down. It is safe to argue that these types of operations became the forefront of ISAF operations in Kabul once the threat from the power brokers slowly receded throughout 2004.

The command and control arrangements and their relationship to direct action operations posed serious problems for the conduct of KMNB operations during Roto 1. Where MGen Leslie and BGen Devlin used a variety of means coupled with little fanfare to creatively bypass bureaucratic blockages, LGen Hillier and BGen Lacroix tended to meet them head on. Hillier's memoir is fairly blunt on the matter:

> I did not turn to Canada as my go-to nation when I wanted a job done, because of the complex and cumbersome system in Ottawa and bureaucratic approach to operations. When we had missions that had to happen quickly, I went to my British contingent, I went to my Norwegian company and occasionally I went to the French battle group to get them done. Very seldom did I go to Canada. The time, detail, pain, and agony to get something done and the hand-wringing over it, were so extensive that I concluded it just wasn't worthwhile…. If I went to the Canadian battle group, it would take twelve to twenty-four hours to get Ottawa to approve their participation in the raid, assuming they did approve it. If I went to the British contingent or the Norwegians, they'd have the operation not just approved but carried out in less than two hours.[29]

There were additional problems related to publicity. During the handover from Roto 0 to Roto 1, KMNB mounted Operation MAELSTROM. The target was an associate of Anwar Dangar, had linkages to the Pakistani ISI, and controlled a 10-man cell. Information suggested that he was preparing eight vehicle bombs and the primary targets were the American ambassador and the American embassy complex. Afghan security forces (ANSF), which included the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police, were in the first row, while the French battle group was the second row support. Canada provided the sensitive site exploitation team to exploit the site, while the Sperwer TUAV orbited in a surveillance pattern over PD 11. Operation MAELSTROM went in on 14 February 2004, grabbed the target, and successfully exploited the bomb-making site.[30] Media representatives asked questions about the operation, which raised questions about national caveats and thus national limitations. Some wanted to go along on direct action operations but national sensitivities precluded them from doing so – and ISAF HQ, the Canadian National Command Element Centre and KMNB HQ could not explain why without revealing operational detail.

Photo Credit: DND KA2004-A018D

Photo Credit: DND KA2004-A024D

Increased terrorist operations conducted by Hezb-e Islami, Taliban, and Al Qaeda cells led to aggressive disruption operations coordinated by Kabul Multinational Brigade and the Canadian ISTAR and ASIC organizations. These operations led to the apprehension or elimination of terrorist cells before they could affect the emergent political process.

As Commander KMNB, BGen Lacroix was instrumental in improving the relationships between the ANSF and ISAF, particularly as it related to intelligence flow and direct action operations. The installation of Amrullah Saleh as National Directorate of Security chief after the 27–28 January attacks was a significant development. BGen Lacroix approached Saleh, the Kabul Chief of Police, and the commander of the Kabul Garrison to set up a meeting between the four entities. Lacroix was immediately taken aback with accusations from the Afghans that there was a lack of information sharing from ISAF KMNB to their respective agencies. And of course, there was not, as trust had not been consistently built up yet between the personalities. BGen Devlin had rapport with some Afghans and "created the environment" for Lacroix to build on, but, as Lacroix learned, that was not necessarily transferable to him because he had not been there long enough and was not known as well as Devlin – yet. KMNB used the ISAF change of command ceremony security arrangements coordination as a means to build up trust by asking the Afghans to take the lead. After the successful conclusion of the operation, the head of the National Directorate of Security in Kabul met with Lacroix for several hours and essentially opened the doors to the substantial body of information they retained. From then on, KMNB/National Directorate of Security cooperation steadily improved. During this time, the number of direct action operations in Kabul increased from six in Roto 0 to 30 in Roto 1.[31]

Then there was the issue of national caveats. Several ISAF nations had weak minority governments that were sensitized to any problem that might emerge from their personnel killing or detaining people – or their personnel being killed or detained and later eviscerated. At the same time, some national contingents did not follow the Canadian six-month tour, or were otherwise out of phase with the Canadian rotation. For example, the French had a four-month rotation, while the Germans had six months, and the Dutch helicopter unit changed every two months between Afghanistan and Iraq. This meant that there was constant turbulence in knowledge of rules of engagement, national limitations, and type A personalities, all hampered by the use of several European languages. Some nations would not operate alongside or under the control of other nations, for whatever historical reasons. This meant that ISAF HQ and KMNB had to develop a matrix so they could select a force as quickly as possible to conduct a particular mission under time constraints. Unfortunately, the Canadian battalion group was one of the ones that were constrained the most. ISTAR Company and the ASIC were not; since they "watched" and did not kick down doors, they were low-risk from a political perspective in Ottawa. A typical direct action 'package' might consist of Canadian Coyotes and a German LUNA UAV, with the National Directorate of Security kicking down the door and the neighbourhood or compound cordoned off with the Norwegian company. The Canadian ASIC or its British equivalent might handle the exploitation of the site.[32]

An example was Operation SPEED conducted in late March 2004. The National Directorate of Security developed information that explosives were about to be brought into the city through Western District by an individual who had connections to both HiG and Al Qaeda. The target compound was in the Canadian area of operations. The National Directorate of Security, through its newly invigorated connections with KMNB, asked for support. KMNB was unable to get the Canadian contingent to react in time (72 hours), so it tasked the British Patrol Company to provide the cordon for the National Directorate of Security. The 13-man sensitive site exploitation team was Canadian, with British EOD, Military Police, and K-9 teams supporting the effort. Three men from the cell were apprehended and a substantial amount of bomb-making materials was discovered.[33] Here was a major terrorist target, right inside the Canadian area, and 3eR22eR had to be left out of the operation while British forces had to be brought in. Situations like this had the potential to undermine Canadian credibility.

A follow-on operation, HAMMER, was mounted by a combined KMNB/National Directorate of Security force three days after SPEED. It netted five insurgents. An unrelated operation, SWIFT, was a combined Kabul City Police/KMNB operation that hit three sites simultaneously throughout the city. Explosives were uncovered at all locations. Canadian participation approximated that in Operation SPEED. These operations significantly degraded HiG and associated allies' terrorist activities in March and well into April 2004.[34]

There were unanticipated information sources that developed as the Canadian units encountered the population both on patrol and through CIMIC activity. In addition to human intelligence operations, commanders found more and more that "information collected by CIMIC teams from [non-governmental organizations] and [international organizations] has allowed [CIMIC] to collect information to help with the planning of directed operations as well as operations conducted outside of the area of operations."[35] The idea of fusing CIMIC information from the CIMIC Coordination Cell and ASIC was a new angle that needed development and refinement – but would pose problems later on.

With the expansion in the number of direct action operations in the area of operations in 2004, the issue of what to do with Afghans detained during operations once again emerged as Col Tremblay explained to the DCDS:

> The issue of questioning and handling Afghan detainees was also difficult…. TFK applied common sense and followed all international and national laws and protocols in handling detainees. However, TFK does not yet possess an appropriate facility for the handling and questioning of Afghan detainees. Given the recent scandal in Iraq, this issue is far from being resolved.[36]

The 3eR22eR Battalion Group Operations

Once LCol Roy and the soldiers of the 3eR22eR Battalion Group were on the ground, they eased into the new environment with a series of patrols designed to deter criminal activity in PD 7 and PD 14. 3eR22eR was structured similarly to 3 RCR: one LAV III company and two light companies that had Iltis. There was also an independent LAV III troop. 3eR22eR brought over more TOW systems (six vice two in the previous rotation) mounted again in Iltis and controlled by the Anti-Armour Platoon. Like 3 RCR, 3eR22eR had a dedicated CIMIC Platoon and a combat engineer squadron, 52e Escadron, from 5 RGC.[37]

The Iltis-based companies were obviously problematic in the new IED environment, at least until a replacement vehicle could be acquired and deployed. Another limitation was certifying the Improvised Explosive Device Disposal teams, who now had to update their knowledge base and procedures after they arrived in theatre. Both factors reduced 3eR22eR's patrolling reach in the Canadian area of responsibility for the early weeks of the deployment.[38]

Given the situation, what could 3eR22eR do to continue to maintain a stable environment? One solution was to work with the Kabul City Police, assist them when needed and improve their capacity where necessary. The Key Entry Point plan was still in effect. Operation COBRA became the codename for 3eR22eR –Kandahar City Police joint vehicle checkpoints and other measures associated with using these zones to generate unpredictability in the minds of those seeking to infiltrate the city. 3eR22eR developed a plan whereby they would randomly man KEPs D, E and F, overtly or covertly observing from a distance. The issue was KEP E as it lay outside the ISAF area of operations and Ottawa would not give permission for 3eR22eR to move what amounted to 500 to 1 000 metres west toward Maidan Shar. When the Kabul City Police found out that 3eR22eR was unable to go with them to KEP E, they went home, leaving KEP E wide open to whoever wanted to drive in from HiG-infested Wardak province.[39] LGen Hillier, frustrated with the situation, declared that KEP E was inside of a temporary extension of the ISAF area of operations for specific windows of 3eR22eR activity, in an attempt to put end to this nonsense – to no avail.[40]

Operation LOUP GAROU, a saturation of PD 14 with 3eR22eR, went in to deter criminal activity. CIMIC and the Field Security Team noted that the 3eR22eR emphasis on police support was producing inadvertent effects. Some of the Afghans thought that ISAF was there to replace the police, not supplement them, which generated questions among the local leaders as to who had the power. This state of affairs potentially undermined the authority of the police. The subtleties of second row support were lost on a population that saw any armed group as the local power. Indeed, relations with the Kabul City Police were also deteriorating: "policemen were less inclined to patrol with 3eR22eR" and this

had a noticeable effect on reducing police presence in the Canadian area of operations.[41] By early April 2004, the police in PD 14 were intimidating the population and presenting an anti-ISAF attitude. And no one was exactly sure why.[42]

Photo Credit: DND KA2004-R101-458

After nearly two years of operations in Afghanistan, Canadian patrols eventually were equipped with Arid CADPAT uniforms but it took some time for the procurement system to acquire arid CADPAT equipment.

Fortunately, Ottawa was able to get moving on the Iltis replacement issue. In March 2004, 60 of the new vehicles, dubbed the Light Utility Vehicle Wheeled and better known to the soldiers as the G Wagon, were scheduled to be flown in from Graz, Austria on four chartered heavy-lift flights. The downside was that machine guns and TOW weapons systems could not be mounted on them because of the design.[43] At the very least, the armour package was superior to that of the Iltis, which had none. The issue of how to handle the environmental aspects of the defunct Iltis fleet now caused handwringing in some quarters who thought the vehicles should be flown home at great expense to be disposed of. Cooler heads prevailed and determined that the Iltis fleet would be scrapped in Kabul.

Toward the end of March, 3eR22eR was finally permitted to be involved in a directed operation. Information came in that the Taliban established a covert cache in the Western District consisting of 35 vehicle-loads of weapons just before the Northern Alliance drove them from the city. A shopkeeper, who had been a cook with the Taliban,

was placed in charge to watch it. 3eR22eR was to work with the Kabul City Police to establish a cordon, while 52 Escadron's EOD/IEDD teams accompanied the police. Operation SCORPION went down on 29 March. Five people were detained – all were released by the police. No weapons were found, but aluminum powder used in the construction of IEDs, ISAF documents relating to the Constitutional Loya Jirga plus a photograph of General Gliemeroth were discovered during the sensitive site exploitation phase.[44]

The CIMIC Platoon, working with the Legal Advisor, was prepared to handle "damage control" if necessary after these operations: this was reminiscent of the more traditional CIMIC role from the Cold War. The 3eR22eR Battalion Group leveraged 52e Escadron in support of its CIMIC plan. There was a huge amount of unexploded ordnance in West Kabul after years of war. Operation VENDANGE was designed to improve the security of the local population through the removal and destruction of unexploded ordnance. This involved educating the population via information operations support from KMNB and ISAF HQ, plus a turn-in programme and a response plan. It also involved transporting ammo to the Pol-e Charkhi ammunition storage site and ongoing rotational security for the site.[45]

Photo Credit: DND KA2004-R103-1593 L

Attacks on International Security Assistance Force vehicles led to increased armoured vehicle use. After a lethal attack on a German Army bus which killed and wounded over thirty soldiers, Bison armoured personnel carriers were used to convoy personnel to and from Kabul Afghanistan International Airport.

Photo Credit: DND IS2004-2066a

The lack of its own medium-left helicopter capability, the result of short-sighted decisions taken in the 1990s, forced the Canadian ISAF contingent to rely on German CH-53s for airmobile operations as well as medical evacuation.

Civil-Military Cooperation, Canadian International Development Agency, and Development

Col Tremblay, the TF KABUL commander, was increasingly concerned about force protection in and around Camp Julien. In the early stages of the mission, he sought to synergize Canadian resources and capacity to develop community relations as part of that effort. 3 RCR had a CIMIC programme in place, and 3R22eR took up where that left off. However, TF KABUL developed a broader plan called the Community Improvement Programme (CIP).

This programme built on 3 RCR CIMIC foundations but sought to bring an even more systematic process to the problem; its stated objective was "to re-establish, rehabilitate, and reconstruct some of the infrastructure necessary to sustain a community."[46] The problem, as it turned out, was the size of the "community" – Canada and KMNB were dealing with hundreds of thousands of people in West Kabul with a Canadian CIMIC Platoon, and a Norwegian CIMIC Platoon. The Community Improvement Programme was supposed to influence the population within the five to 10-kilometre band around Camp Julien, while KMNB and ISAF CIMIC were supposed to handle the rest of the area of operations. 3R22eR CIMIC wound up working everywhere.

Col Tremblay told the medical staff to get outside the camp and start doing local clinics. The field ambulance personnel conducted these in civilian clothes to lower their profile. The clinics also included female nurses. The Legal Advisors became the *de facto* grievance staff: if the local population had an issue, they were told to pass it on to the Legal Advisor, who held meetings with local leaders. The engineers integrated their unexploded ordnance clean-up programme, Operation VENDANGE, with the Community Improvement Programme.[47]

The CIMIC Platoon carried on where its predecessors left off. For the most part, CIMIC focused on: well-drilling and repairs to pump houses and systems; the renovation of buildings so they could be used for education and the provision of educational equipment; the identification and provision of garbage collection sites; and the renovation of fire halls and the rehabilitation of firefighting equipment.[48]

Notably, CIMIC was also able to provide high-frequency communications to the police in a number of districts. CIDA however, was unwilling or unable to release funds to assist the police, and it appeared that the Germans, who were responsible for police training and support, were doing little or nothing when it came to police support in Western Kabul. This was yet another precursor to problems that were encountered in Kandahar in 2005 when the Canadian PRT attempted to improve the state of policing.[49] CIMIC also tried to develop synergies and coordination with non-governmental aid organizations. The idea of working with non-governmental organizations, however, proved problematic:

> The [CIP] program was not able to serve as a catalyst to lead other NGOs into areas. The program was not able to integrate itself into an already-established NGO community. Roto 1 established contact with several NGOs and attempted to work jointly with them…. CIMIC organization planned and conducted three different meetings on Camp Julien with several NGOs in an attempt to harmonize our respective efforts. Unfortunately it is extremely difficult to enact joint projects with NGOs because CIMIC is focusing on short-term small-scale, large-impact projects whereas NGOs are implementing projects over a much longer period…. It is recommended that CIMIC work more closely with private industries, as they tend to focus on reconstruction activities and they generally possess superior management skills and are efficient at implementing projects.[50]

As for CIMIC/CIDA connectivity, the CIMIC/CIDA interface did not progress significantly during this rotation: the CIMIC Platoon was involved with 140 small-scale community impact projects in the first three months of operations; 11 legacy projects from 3 RCR rotation were completed; 39 more projects were identified by 3eR22eR CIMIC Platoon; and 15 had to be cancelled. Accessing CIDA monies remained problematic:

> The approval of CIDA funding for CIMIC projects is viewed as overly cumbersome and bureaucratic, to the point where it becomes extremely difficult to spend what amounts to small sums of money…. The fact that a clearly defined envelope of operational funds for CIMIC projects was not provided from the outset generated significant increase in the workload of the battalion group CIMIC/Liaison organization. Indeed, CIMIC personnel had to conduct a blitz in the early stages of the tour to identify and develop projects that could be potentially financed by Task Force Kabul funds without being sure of the availability of those funds…. CIMIC must be able to exploit fleeting opportunities that support the commander's intent but may not be line with CIDA's funding scheme.[51]

Notably,

> Harmonizing CIDA objectives and military objectives was a constant challenge. The issue of CIMIC being a "branch" of CIDA and having to implement CIDA policies and objectives needs to be addressed. The CIMIC goals of force protection and moving towards a desired end-state appear to be in conflict with some of CIDA's goals – specifically the CIDA goal of ensuring "gender equality" issues. It was a difficult task for this mission, especially in a society where the pursuance of gender equality could have created tension, since it appeared that this society might not yet be in a position to tackle this sensitive issue.[52]

DND and NDHQ did not handle the issue of CIMIC/CIDA/NGO interaction well. The same problems encountered by MGen Leslie on Roto 0 regarding accessing monies plagued Roto 1. More importantly, elements in the DCDS organization were increasingly worried about "optics." In this case, there was a debate over how "active" CIMIC could or should be as a force protection mechanism. These people were concerned that 3eR22eR's use of CIMIC to collect information might jeopardize relationships within the non-governmental organization community and "polarize the Canadian Forces from certain agencies in the [non-governmental and international organization] community."

The DCDS replied, stating that:

> Recognizing that Force Protection is the primary goal of the proposed activities, projects that propose the use of CIMIC as an active means of information gathering cannot be supported. To avoid jeopardizing current and future CIMIC interaction with NGOs and other non-military organizations the CIMIC doctrinal premise of information gathering and the establishment of goodwill being spin-off benefits, not direct goals, needs to be adhered to.[53]

Was CIMIC in Afghanistan to support CIDA and the non-governmental organizations, or was CIMIC in Afghanistan to support the Canadian Army's deployed contingent that was supporting the Afghan Transitional Administration? The DCDS and others mistakenly assumed that the goals of various non-governmental organizations coincided with Canadian and Afghan Transitional Administration goals and then tacitly determined that Canada's relations with non-governmental organizations globally somehow were more important than CIMIC operations designed to protect Canadian soldiers in the lethal environment that was Kabul. The idea that Canadians should be put at risk out of fear of criticism from a non-Canadian organization or organizations, entities unelected by the Canadian people and not subject to the Canadian democratic process, beggars the imagination. This problem demanded high-level interdepartmental policy discussion and clarification from the elected government in Canada – but it was not effectively addressed at this time and it had long-term implications when Canada took over the Kandahar PRT. A larger but unasked question that fell out of this problem was which Canadian government department had the priority in Afghanistan when their missions conflicted: DND, DFAIT, or CIDA? There was no mechanism in 2004 to sort this out either in Kabul or Ottawa and again, this had long-term effects in Kandahar later on.

The Strategic Dimension

As the new Canadian units took over in Kabul, they arrived just in time to observe massive upheavals for the Afghan Transition Administration as it fought to establish a legitimate government in the face of multiple threats. As with the previous rotation under MGen Leslie and BGen Devlin, the new Canadian commanders were confronted with a plethora of potentially catastrophic situations that had to be addressed with a combination of guile and adroit manoeuvring. And, as before, Canadians found themselves at the centre of all of these processes in Kabul and beyond. There were five of them. The first one was the ongoing heavy weapons cantonment operation in Kabul: it was in progress by February 2004. Heavy weapons cantonment removed the weapons that were a direct threat to stability in the capital, and significantly contributed to stability during the political deliberations in December and January 2004, but it did not address the presence of the power brokers' forces in the city itself. That was the job of DDR, and that programme had not made a lot of headway. The artillery, tanks, and anti-aircraft systems were progressively being cantoned, and that was good, but there were several thousand men with small arms still in the city. They had to be demobilized too. Second, weapons cantonment or DDR processes had not been established for the rest of the country, particularly the increasingly volatile north and northwest Afghan provinces where the fault lines between the various Northern Alliance forces were located. There were other power brokers out there and as the Afghan Transitional Administration and ISAF expanded, there would be friction. Third, there was the issue of elections. The size, shape, form, timing, and methodology had to be established and implemented. Fourth and barely perceptible in February-March 2004, there was a Taliban insurgency lurking in the background. Fifth, HiG and Al Qaeda continued to conduct urban terrorism in Kabul. Both of these last two matters had to be addressed in a more systematic fashion.

The critical, central piece of the puzzle were the elections. The international community was not going to invest in the reconstruction of Afghanistan if there was not a legitimate government in place. That would simply be a waste of resources. Afghanistan had to compete with a variety of countries in Africa and Asia for increasingly scarce relief monies – and many of those countries actually had governments of varying capacities. The UN or the European Union, for example, was not going to make deals with men like Dostum, Sayyaf, or Fahim, nor was the International Monetary Fund nor the World Bank. At the same time, the non-governmental relief organizations generally despised the power brokers and preferred to deal with an internationally recognized government that had UN support. There was growing pressure from the non-governmental organizations on various governments to back the Afghan Transitional Administration, and thus the electoral process. Note that neither aid communities were in a position to consult the Afghan people and ask what they wanted; both groups were caught up in their own standards of practice developed outside Afghanistan

and were imposing their paradigms on the situation – thus the need for elections and elected Afghan representatives to work with. Afghanistan had to have the machinery to be able to re-join the world community and thus derive benefits from those relationships – and it was not yet in that position in 2004.

Of particular note, the problem of counter-narcotics and where it fit into the larger scheme of things must be mentioned. In a very general sense, the Western European powers were particularly concerned with the flow of opium and its derivatives from the region westwards. This was not a new problem – it existed back in the 1960s. In this case, however, there was a belief in some quarters that a new Afghan government might be able to shut off the flow of opium from Afghanistan. The main proponents of this were the British government and elements within the U.S. State Department and law enforcement community who essentially viewed Afghanistan as an Asian Colombia. A variety of counter-narcotics programmes led by the British and funded by the U.S. State Department emerged as the Afghans worked out their new policing structures. For all intents and purposes, these programmes appeared as if they were designed to assist the Afghan Transitional Administration with stability inside Afghanistan but their primary purpose was to serve other nation's domestic political agendas related to drug consumption.

The combination of Afghan Transitional Administration and international community initiatives and programmes presented a serious threat to the power brokers. Mentoring and expanding the Afghan National Army, combined with removal of militia heavy weapons, coupled to the demobilization of the militias themselves, took away the power brokers' primary coercive tools. Holding elections would potentially shift the allegiances of the people that were currently under their control by allowing those people choice. Implementing counternarcotics operations threatened some elements financially. In short, this was a graduated, wholesale, transfer of authority from the power brokers to an elected, representative government. What was in it for the power brokers? Why should they go along with the programme? Why should the international community expect them to just give up without a fight? These were the people who fought the Soviets (or sided with them from time to time, like Dostum…) and then the Taliban. It was unrealistic to think that this transition would be smooth and it was misguided to think of the power brokers in solely adversarial terms. There were even some who wanted the power brokers subjected to Bosnia-like war crimes trials, but there was an unreality to these concepts. The power brokers in Afghanistan were the victors in a war against the Taliban and this was not a Bosnian peacekeeping operation. NATO did not run Afghanistan in the way it did Bosnia. The power brokers were a reality and they had to be handled in such a way to avoid another civil war, not antagonized by or threatened with the Western human rights apparatus led by Louise Arbour. And that was the unstated policy of the Canadians in Kabul.[54]

The tools that Hillier and Lacroix had to work with were the same weilded by Leslie and Devlin, and like their predecessors, they used them in combinations to influence decision making as well as to influence discrete events. For example, one had to stop thinking of 3eR22eR solely as an infantry battalion or a manoeuvre unit and think of it as an influence tool. It could be used to pressure Sayyaf. It could bolster the police and reduce crime. It could reduce terrorism in its area of operation in conjunction with other organizations. Its numbers permitted Canadian commanders to be in the positions they held and to claim influence in coalition circles, which translated into Canadian involvement in dispute resolution in Mazar-e Sharif and Konduz, or in establishment of planning relationships and coordination with the Operation ENDURING FREEDOM organizations, Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A) and CJTF-180.[55] Because of his superior relations with Canadian commanders, Canadian ambassador Chris Alexander frequently leveraged Canadian Army capacities in his deliberations with others in the capital. All of the activities of the ETT, the ISTAR Company, the All Source Intelligence Centre and so on, were geared to this environment and the restrictions imposed by the DCDS started to seriously chafe on this system.

In line with the Constitutional Loya Jirga, President Karzai's transitional government established criteria for the national and provincial elections, which were tentatively scheduled for June 2004. All parties had to register, and there were conditions. Military, police, and judiciary personnel could not stand for election. Parties based on anti-Islamic principles were not permitted. Parties were not allowed to instigate social, religious, or regional prejudices, nor could they espouse doctrines that threatened individual rights and freedoms. No military wings of the parties were permitted and foreign funding was disallowed. The Constitutional Loya Jirga Secretariat was transformed into the Joint Electoral Monitoring Body (JEMB). Its task was to prepare, organize, conduct, and oversee the elections. The JEMB was to work closely with the UN and draw on its planning capacity where required; it was up and running by the end of February 2004.[56]

The problem was capacity. The JEMB simply did not have enough horsepower. When Hillier learned of this, he pressured the European Union to get more managerial resources.[57] Informal information exchanges between the Canadians at ISAF and the Americans at CFC-A eventually uncovered another serious problem. There was a UN security plan for the voter registration process but it had not been coordinated with either ISAF or the Americans. The timelines did not match up at all. Another sticking point related to ISAF expansion: how many ISAF troops would there be and where would the elections take place? The UNAMA electoral component was now asking an ISAF liaison officer to help align the timelines. Hillier met with the UNAMA leadership to find a way to get the UN Secretary General to approach NATO for help with elections security. To assist further, ISAF even provided President Karzai with a draft letter to NATO to ask NATO for more support![58]

The European Union representatives who were involved with building up the elections monitoring capacity then expressed concerns to ISAF. Their people informed them that the Afghan population in general was expecting the presence of international monitors to ensure that the elections would be free and fair. Who would handle their security? And what about the polling sites themselves? The Ministry of the Interior expressed frustration to the Canadian leadership over the lack of a UNAMA voter registration security plan, commenting that the situation was not as good as it was for the Constitutional Loya Jirga.[59]

The situation was further aggravated when five Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) aid workers were killed by insurgents in eastern Afghanistan on 24 February 2004. CARE publicly called out ISAF and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM demanding that they concentrate on improving security, that PRTs become involved in security operations as well as coordinate their operations with non-governmental organizations working in the provinces.[60]

Despite becoming the virtual clearinghouse for international community and Afghan Transitional Administration relations on key issues, ISAF was hamstrung. NATO was still wrestling with getting enough personnel to man Kabul International Airport, let alone expand beyond Konduz. By May 2004, the process to get more European members to commit to Afghanistan had failed. A frustrated SACEUR declared that "without these critical requirements being met, expansion beyond Kabul would be difficult and would involve considerable risk to the troops on the ground…. NATO has now undertaken a mission that nations [are] unable or unwilling to resource."[61] Worse, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer told the Canadian ambassador, "Afghanistan highlights the inadequacy of our force generation process…we are at great risk of failing to honour commitments we have made…. Our credibility and the future of Afghanistan is on the line."[62]

The American commanders in Afghanistan, specifically Lt Gen David Barno, were agitated with the lack of progress on all fronts. As a result, CFC-A moved forward with detailed unilateral planning for Voter Registration and Election security. With the deployment of the 25th Infantry Division to Afghanistan, CJTF-180 now became CJTF-76. The American forces had recently reorganized their three regional commands; each regional command was in charge of the PRTs in the region and the manoeuvre task forces, usually a battalion per region, responsible for conducting operations at the provincial and regional levels. The American planners' strategies took into account that ISAF could only handle Voter Registration and Election support in Kabul and Kabul province and 40 kilometres surrounding the Konduz PRT. Operation ENDURING FREEDOM forces would handle everything else, in lieu of any further NATO support.[63] Once again, necessity and practicality drove 'strategic harmonization,' not a considered, long-term approach.

The need for better international community – Afghan Transitional Administration coordination – was increasingly evident in early 2004. The various 'security sector reform' meetings, group of principles meetings, and forums for international community coordination were failing. Situation reports back to Canada from ISAF HQ noted that:

> The SSR [security sector reform] meeting held today highlighted a number of COMISAF's philosophical concerns about the conduct and coordination of ATA/IC activities in Afghanistan. While the discussions were useful and constructive, they were dominated by [International Community] representatives at the expense of contributions from ATA representatives. The meeting also demonstrated the overall lack of coordination between the pillars of SSR and confirmed the need for and validity of the Roadmap for Afghanistan Project.[64]

Similarly, in a group of principles meeting, "the discussions that took place provided clear evidence of the lack of coordination between the key agencies involved in the programmes to rebuild Afghanistan."[65] Experiences like this led to deeper Canadian Army involvement in Afghan reconstruction issues in 2005–2006.

Problems with the Power Brokers

Operation GONDOLA, the Canadian support to heavy weapons cantonment, had been chugging along steadily in the background. Roto 1 was much more reluctant to support DDR than Roto 0. The attitude in some quarters was that DDR was a "Leslie show" that used what they believed to be his excess support capacity to conduct DDR. Roto 1 did not think it had any excess capacity so it chose to focus its resources on supporting Canadians first.[66] In any event, contacts continued to be made with local commanders, and negotiations were conducted between the Ministry of Defence to arrange for the delivery of the systems to the cantonment sites. The process ground to a halt in early March 2004 over 16 Armoured Brigade, a formation located in northern Kabul and associated with Fahim's Tajiks. Commander ISAF approached Fahim in an effort to get movement on the cantonment process, a move that succeeded.[67]

The issue over 16 Brigade led to deeper analysis at ISAF of future cantonment efforts and the direction of DDR generally. ISAF learned that the Afghan New Beginnings Program, working with the Ministry of Defence, had come up with a cantonment/DDR plan for the rest of Afghanistan. They were having problems staffing the plan and, in any event, President Karzai had not endorsed it. When Hillier met with Karzai, he learned that there were serious concerns about the linkage between cantonment/DDR and the voter registration process.[68] In effect, dismantling the militias and not having a viable Afghan National Army in place would lead to a security vacuum that the Taliban and others could

and would exploit. Leaving the militias in place left coercive tools in the hands of the power brokers around the country that could be used to influence the election. Cantonment had and continued to have a positive effect on Kabul, but Kabul was not the rest of the country.

At the end of March, a larger meeting was convened which included UN, NATO, Ministry of Defence, Karzai, Fahim, Dostum and General Abdul Rahim Wardak. Dostum was key because of the growing problems in northern Afghanistan, where ISAF was expanding. This meeting revealed that several divergent agendas were becoming problematic. Karzai wanted all the AMFs gone by 2005 and he did not want ethnic balancing in the army; he was annoyed at the lack of progress on DDR planning and was keen to publicly announce progress on DDR in the run-up to the election. The intended audiences were probably the Afghan population and the international community donors, many of whom were pushing for the removal of the "war lords" though others in the non-governmental organization community suspected American pressure related to the upcoming American elections. As it turned out, the concern about a security gap between AMFs and the Afghan National Army came from Wardak, who wanted written assurances that ISAF would fill the void (which of course was not possible given the issues surrounding ISAF expansion). Wardak was now arguing with Afghan New Beginnings and the UN over the numbers of AMF personnel to be disbanded under DDR. Wardak was setting the numbers higher than agreed – 4 000 more than the current number.[69]

What did all of this mean? In effect, the power brokers were doing what Afghans do best: negotiate, stall, negotiate again, hum and haw, and negotiate again until they wear their opponent down and get what they want. This was no different from an average bazaar negotiation, which involves a combination of public drama, entertainment and socializing as a process to reach an agreement that satisfies both parties materially as well as their prestige. Western international community personnel and Western military personnel had a different concept of time and wanted everything done now because it had to fit a timeline or a schedule. That was not the Afghan way. 'Face' was important, not the need to meet a Western deadline. Moreover, the power brokers were loath to just walk away from their positions. And why should they?

The constant drip of Operation GONDOLA was in part the Canadian response to this. Throughout March 2004, heavy weapons in Kabul, in this case the National Guard Brigade's kit, continued to move into the Rish Khvor and Banda Daud cantonment sites, thus reducing the possibility of their use as negotiating tools or coercive tools by the power brokers in the capital. 31st Infantry Division, 11th Air Division, and 216 Air Defence Regiment were next.

Further discussions between ISAF and the UN served to solidify concerns about the cantonment/DDR and Voter Registration and Election processes. The DDR process, when sampled, was heavily weighted to demobilization and not reintegration. To make the numbers

work, militia soldiers were simply being let go and not provided with their reintegration kit, or worse; some commanders were seizing the reintegration supplies for themselves. The prospect of thousands of former AMF troops wandering around aimlessly without jobs was, in the words of the UN representatives, "more dangerous than doing nothing."[70]

It was evident to those who had served in Kosovo that demobilized soldiers could potentially be recruited by power brokers for their own private security forces which would not be, technically, militias in Afghanistan but could still be used as coercive tools operating in competition with the government. This is exactly what happened later in Kandahar province. In time, the UN would come up with a new programme called Disbandment of Illegally Armed Groups (DIAG).

In any event, the UN representatives pressed ISAF for more support to the voter registration process. The UN explored the possibility of deploying ISAF forces to their central offices throughout the country. They also wanted ISAF and CFC-A to assist with polling site security. [71] The pressure to get ISAF to expand beyond Kabul and Konduz increased and the idea that the PRTs could be used for other purposes, like demobilization and electoral support, started to emerge.

Matters between the power brokers, the UN and the Afghan Transitional Administration seriously deteriorated in May 2004. Karzai's push to have 40% of the militias demobilized and reintegrated before the elections was not going to be met. The UN pointed the finger at several power brokers' militias who were stalling or outright refusing to provide lists of personnel to the DDR authorities. The primary culprits were Ismael Khan in Herat, Maj Gen Daud Daud's 6th Corps in Konduz, and General Atta's 7th Corps near Mazar-e Sharif. All three, incidentally, were aligned with Fahim, who was the Defence Minister. Rashid Dostum remained above the fray, for the time being, making pious pronouncements about how there should only be one army in Afghanistan (many thought he meant his, not the Afghan National Army). Sayyaf's forces, now being cantoned in Kabul, stalled on the DDR part too. Hillier concluded that "The credibility of any elections held in the current climate will naturally be held into question. Elections would simply legitimize the current power holder, remove any incentive for further disarmament and leave conditions ripe for future conflict…the slow pace of voter registration also threatens the feasibility of holding free and fair elections."[72]

The cantonment of 8th Division stalled. The change of personalities in command of militia forces in Faryab province also threatened a delicate power balance there related to narcotics trafficking and threatened to turn violent. Information then came in that Ismael Khan and Fahim were possibly planning to take out Karzai. It was deemed not credible. Ismael Khan then declared that he would refuse to submit to DDR and one of Atta's divisional commanders refused to decommission 1st Division unless Dostum's 53rd Division

was also decommissioned at the same time.[73] Factional violence killed six people including police near Mazar-e Sharif. In the midst of this, Karzai's Cabinet passed the Electoral Law on 12 May 2004.

Hillier flew up to Mazar-e Sharif to see what was going on. On that trip, he learned that Balkh province, 35 kilometres to the south, was essentially "an arena" for Dostum's and Atta's forces "to settle an old score" and that there was little that outside forces could do for the time being. The idea of a delegation of international community ambassadors plus the UN special representative was mooted but it would take some time to implement.[74]

By the end of May, the number of power brokers and independent commanders who were resisting the Afghan government on DDR and other matters was increasing. Atta accused the UN of publicly insulting him; he would not cooperate without an apology, which the UN would not give in on. In addition to the problems in Balkh, Mazar-e Sharif, Konduz and Herat, militia commanders in Parwan, Panjshir, and now Kabul province were refusing to cooperate. The situation was critical.[75]

Several things happened more or less simultaneously to temporarily defuse this powder keg. Bismillah Khan approached Hamid Karzai and asked him to consider a more graduated approach to DDR. By the end of May, Karzai made it known that he was leaning in that direction. Second, the American ambassador met with the regional power brokers to find out what, exactly, they wanted and what could be negotiated. He later was able to get Fahim and Sayyaf to agree to produce manning lists, the precursor to DDR but not agreement on DDR itself.[76]

Word emerged that Karzai and the power brokers made some sort of power-sharing deal, but details were sketchy. One version had Karzai telling the power brokers they could not participate in the elections if they were in control of non-DDR'd formations, while the other version was that he completely caved in and the graduated approach was just a smokescreen.[77] In neither version was there any movement on DDR in the belt of militia forces just outside Kabul, nor was there any connection made to the increased level of violence in the northwest, nor was there any linkage made to the elections process.

Operation HERMES and Voter Registration and Election Operations

ISAF monitored events closely and concluded that the new DDR arrangements probably would not work over the long term. Every indicator told ISAF that the population did not want to be pressured by regional power brokers; they wanted elections, and they wanted those elections to be conducted in a non-coercive atmosphere run by the international community. The Americans were in the process of re-jigging their countrywide approach to handle Voter Registration and Election operations. Given all of the issues related to power brokers, demobilization and the elections, what could ISAF do to positively contribute to the situation?

There were several considerations. Cantonment was proceeding in the city of Kabul itself, but heavy weapons surveys of the militia formations just outside the capital were going slowly because of power broker reticence. Second, the ISAF area of operations was not fully patrolled, particularly the rural parts of Kabul province, which surrounded the city. Numerous nooks and crannies were observed in the hills, places where people could hide things discreetly, and terrain anomalies where an artificial boundary line on a map left unpatrolled gaps between ISAF and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. There were isolated population groups (potential registered voters or insurgents!) who may not even have known about an upcoming election. Then, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM virtually ignored the adjacent provinces whose natural terrain features funneled into Kabul-Wardak, Parwan, Kapisa, Logar and Panjshir because of its focus on the border provinces in Regional Command (East) as combating cross-border insurgents was the order of the day. With the killings of elections personnel elsewhere, the idea of assisting with their security as they went about their tasks in these areas gained credence at KMNB. The JEMB established its Central Region: it consisted of those same provinces. Could some synergy be found? BGen Lacroix wanted to "show the bad guys that ISAF wasn't restricted by lines on a map."[78] (See Figure 5-2)

One particular area of concern was Koh-e Safi. This district lay on the eastern edge of the ISAF area of operations, but it was sandwiched between a mountain range to the west and the artificial area of operations line, which lay to the east; the mountains cut the area off from Kabul but the area wasn't really part of Kapisa province or Parwan province. It was a natural staging area for insurgents who wanted to attack Bagram and Kabul. KMNB mounted Operation BAFFIN in late April 2004 to poke around and see what was going on. The recce determined that there was no enemy activity visible but there was a neglected population centre there.[79]

Operation HERMES evolved from this thinking. The planners looked at the JEMB timeline and built HERMES to support it:[80]

- **Stage I** Registration 1 May until 30 June 2004.
  Target: 5 800 sites and 10 million eligible voters

- **Stage II** Challenge and Campaign period 1 July-11 September 2004.
  Campaigning for Presidential and Wolesi Jirga elections.

- **Stage III** Polling/Elections, possibly September 2004.
  Voting conducted at sites and then transported to Kabul for counting.

- **Stage IV** Run-off elections

FIGURE 5-2:
Operation HERMES – Voter Registration and Election Operations Areas,
2004

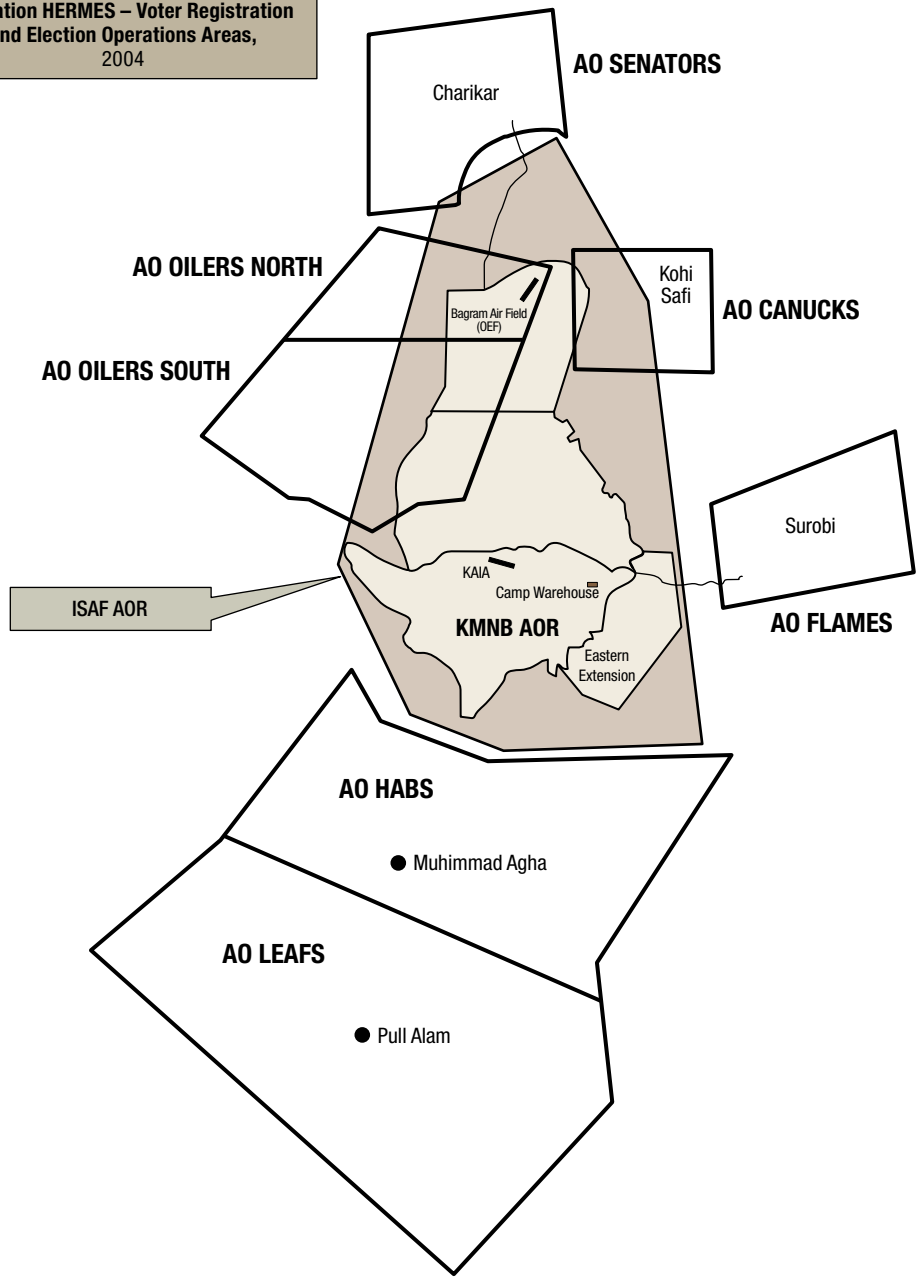


Figure 5-2: Operation HERMES – Voter Registration and Election Operations Areas, 2004

ISAF priorities were to have Kabul Multinational Brigade support heavy weapons cantonment and DDR in Kabul and Konduz, then conduct 'out of area' operations in the Central Region provinces. All operations were to focus on deterrence and reassurance through shows of force and presence operations in as visible a fashion as possible. This included information operations and logistics support as much as possible to the JEMB itself.[81]

KMNB's concept of operations for Operation HERMES had four phases per targeted area. First, the Brigade G-9 and a liaison officer from the executing unit would deploy to the area and meet with the local elders. They would be invited to Camp Warehouse to meet with Commander KMNB. Second, an initial recce consisting of a recce platoon, a forward observation officer/forward air controller party, plus medical, intelligence, CIMIC and psychological operations personnel would move in and assess the security situation. Commander KMNB would then meet local elders again. A third phase, follow-on operations, was not fully defined; it was to "shape the battlespace for subsequent operations," that is, elections operations. Phase four, subsequent operations, might include the deployment of CIMIC, information operations and medical aid as required. Recce Squadron or 3eR22eR companies would assure protection for all deployments. Importantly, KMNB planners insisted that poppy eradication be completely deconflicted with Operation HERMES so the two were not seen to be linked.[82] ISAF also told the JEMB it would handle any evacuation of JEMB personnel from the ops boxes whether due to medical emergency or threat.

The Operation HERMES operating areas were named after hockey teams. HABS and LEAFS were Logar province to the south, while OILERS and CANUCKS were to the north: CANUCKS was Koh-e Safi district. OILERS had been a main battle area between the Northern Alliance and the Taliban between Bagram and Kabul. Area of operation FLAMES was the Sarobi district, which boasted a hydroelectric dam and the highway to the Khyber Pass.

Hillier approved the plan; the initial focus would be on Koh-e Safi, then Sarobi. Voter Registration and Election still had to be done in Charikar and in Central Military Area West, so these areas were added as well (probably to get the 3eR22eR Battalion Group more fully engaged). If the elections board requested assistance in any of the operations boxes, a "package" would be sent in to set the conditions for their operations as required.[83]

Not surprisingly, there were problems in getting the CDS's authorization for Operation HERMES. Rather than give blanket approval for the operation, the CDS had to give his approval each time a Canadian unit deployed to an operations box. This meant that KMNB had to ask the CDS through the National Command Element and then the DCDS every time it deployed – initial recce, follow-on operations, and subsequent operations – for each operations box. The NCE had to submit, with each situation report, a matrix for each component of Operation HERMES to the DCDS as it unfolded. The CDS then had to

approve each deployment. Needless to say, this slowed down Operation HERMES at a time when a visible presence was required throughout the edges of the Kabul area of operations.

There were also problems getting money for CIMIC support to Operation HERMES. This was the "fleeting nature" of operations that ISAF critics of CIDA's "heavy bureaucracy" referred to previously. Nipa Bannerjee from CIDA did what she could at the Kabul end but in time, BGen Lacroix shifted his efforts when he learned that the American training establishment, TF Phoenix, had a substantial amount of money available through its Commanders Emergency Response Programme (CERP) money. The TF Phoenix commander, who saw the constraints placed on KMNB, offered $1 million to support CIMIC projects. Note that if Canada had not been part of Afghan National Army training with an ETT and had not supported the Americans by hosting their embedded trainers at Camp Julien, KMNB would probably not have been offered these resources. BGen Lacroix wanted to use 75% of the money for Operation HERMES and then pass the rest on to support the Kabul Mayor's projects.[84]

By early June, teams of Canadians from KMNB, Recce Squadron, R Battery, and 3eR22eR were deploying progressively into the Operation HERMES operation boxes while the JEMB voter registration teams came in behind them and went about their tasks. This was a refreshing change of pace for the troops; they had essentially been restricted to the confines of the West Kabul police districts, training police and mounting framework patrols. No resistance was encountered throughout June in any of the operation boxes and no violence was directed against the JEMB teams while they were protected by Canadian ISAF troops. The situation was different over in Nangarhar province, however. A bomb attack against a JEMB bus killed two and wounded several. These people were evacuated by Turkish UH-60 to the Role 3 hospital at Camp Warehouse.[85]

Operation HERMES ultimately allowed the Afghan Transitional Administration to expand its area of influence, albeit temporarily, and contribute toward a positive result in the Voter Registration and Election process. Its deterrence value is more difficult to measure, but if any of the power brokers, the commanders of the AMFs or the insurgents were watching, they would have seen mobile teams going where they wanted, when they wanted, building up support for the government in population groupings, in areas not traditionally controlled by the power brokers.[86]

The ISAF criteria for determining the effectiveness of the Voter Registration and Election process was based on a number of metrics. These included the number of people who registered to vote, their gender, the number of operational voter registration sites and their location. The shift in ISAF and CFC-A operations to support the JEMB in the May-June period most likely had a contributory effect. For example, in early May 2004, 2.3 million people registered with 37 000 people registering daily at 408 sites. This was

considered sluggish.[87] UNAMA and the JEMB were hampered by the lack of transportation and communications, especially in the outlying areas. One month later, with ISAF and CFC-A support, 3 million were registered at 800 sites. Prior to this, the number of female registered voters was 50% of the number of people registering, in a numerically male-dominated society. That number dropped to 35%, an indicator that there was more buy-in to the process from the male population throughout the country.[88] By the end of June, the JEMB told ISAF that "the unrest and security concerns are not directly threatening the VRE process. Voter registration is now in a satisfactory state of development and attaining the unofficial target of 5.2 million registered voters" out of an estimated 10 million possible registered voters.[89] And the numbers continued to grow.

Canadian Contingent Operations

The Canadian contingent, particularly the NSE, continued with Operation GONDOLA; one of its more important cantonments was 11 Air Defence Regiment and 216 Air Defence Regiment operations. These units possessed substantial numbers of SA-13 and SA-7 launchers, as well as anti-aircraft artillery. Any one system was a threat to the vital ISAF air bridge at Kabul International Airport, so these items became a priority once they were discovered during surveys. Their cantonment was no issue and it was completed in April.[90]

As 3eR22eR Battalion Group developed contacts with the police and the population through training and CIMIC activities, more and more information came in from a variety of sources about weapons caches west of Kabul. Their locations varied but, for the most part, they lay either just beyond the area of operations boundary or in immediately adjacent provinces like Wardak and Logar. In a number of cases, timely permission was not given by DCDS, so KMNB used other countries to carry out the location and destruction missions. One of these operations bagged 40 122mm rockets that had been hidden away on the boundary of Paghman district and Wardak province. LCol Roy was finally able to get permission for Operation DAMOCLES I and II, a cache destruction operation in Wardak. This operation successfully destroyed a substantial cache including a Soviet fuel air munition.[91]

ISTAR Company, meanwhile, continued with its framework surveillance and patrol tasks across the multinational brigade area of operations. The Slovenian light reconnaissance unit joined them on Operation OLYMPUS, the establishment of observation posts over-watching downtown Kabul.[92]

Directed operations also continued at a heightened pace. Operation ULYSSES, targeting an explosives facilitator, was 'blown' over an operational security issue and had to be re-cocked by KMNB. When it was finally executed as Operation PENELOPE, 200 kilograms of explosives were seized and 36 people detained by 3eR22eR and the National Directorate of Security.

A concurrent operation, SCHILLER, was a German/French/Afghan Ministry of Interior job targeting those involved with the German bus bombing in 2003. It bagged the commander in charge of the cell that mounted the attack. All of these operations had Canadian participation either as cordon or sensitive site exploitation or in the provision of intelligence. Another operation conducted by another coalition partner bagged the HiG provincial commander in Wardak that had ties to attacks on Canadians.[93] This one was different: Canadians should have been able to, and more importantly, been seen to be able to exact payback for attacks on Canadians. In this case, appearances were and remained important. Having another country do Canada's 'night work' did not contribute to Canada's image within coalition circles or with the enemy, especially when combined with all of the other restrictions regarding Operation HERMES and directed operations.

Then there was Operation HALLE. The Kabul Chief of Police had serious problems with criminal activity in – surprise – PD 5 and PD 14. His own police were suspect and, given the relationship between local police, the Sayyaf organization, and 717th Protection Regiment manning the KEPs, he requested ISAF assistance to 'deter' criminal activity. All of the ISTAR Company surveillance resources were applied, and then the bulk of 3eR22eR swept down through the districts *en masse* on 1 June 2004. Dutch AH-64s hovered and flew back and forth with the TUAV system providing over-watch as the Van Doos LAVs dropped off infantry to conduct snap vehicle checkpoints and neighbourhood framework patrols. Kabul City Police, some from other districts, joined PD 5 and PD 14 police for 'joint patrols.' Saturating the two districts sent a message not only to street criminals but the power brokers in that part of the city. The Kabul Chief of Police was ecstatic with Operation HALLE, and ASIC coverage confirmed its success: it was a high point of battalion group/police cooperation and only reinforced the positive working relationships that had been painstakingly built up.[94]

There were also 'unknowns' in the system conducting direct action operations in the Canadian area of operation. Three operations were mounted in June 2004, without coordination with KMNB, including one in PD 5. On one of these operations, the assaulting force called KMNB on a cell phone and requested EOD support. This was odd, but KMNB responded with the appropriate resources. As it turned out, there was a freelance American group called "Task Force Saber 7" running their own operations in Afghanistan. These involved detaining and interrogating Afghans thought to be involved in terrorism. Led by Keith "Jack" Idema, a man who claimed to be a former special forces soldier, this group was looking for Osama bin Laden ostensibly in order to win the multi-million dollar bounty on him. This 'unit' posed as U.S. special forces personnel. Idema tried to provide the Canadian contingent with alleged information on the terrorist cell that mounted the 27 January attack but he was eventually arrested and jailed by Afghan authorities.[95]

A Growing Insurgency

It is not surprising that ISAF's attention was directed at the problems in northern Afghanistan and around Kabul – that was its area of operations after all until the issue of an Operation ENDURING FREEDOM/ISAF merger was sorted out. That said, ISAF was in a position to observe the early growth of the Taliban insurgency and some of the factors that fuelled it. The idea that NATO ISAF would progressively assume control of some of the existing CFC-A regional commands was already in play in late 2003. By early 2004 the concept of a counter-clockwise progression, from north to west, to south to east, was fleshed out and up for discussion. At the same time, Canada was looking at PRT options and looking for places that would have the greatest strategic effect. At a meeting in late January 2004 between CFC-A, ISAF, and members of the international community, Canadian ambassador Chris Alexander expressed serious concern about the counter-clockwise progression plan. In his travels to the south, he noted there was a growing sense among the Pashtuns that saw the Northern Alliance members, all non-Pashtuns, getting their piece of the action.[96] It was possible that a sense of "Pashtun alienation" (a phrase that emerged during diplomatic discourse) could be a future source of problems, similar to the Northern Alliance power brokers with their reticence games over DDR or worse, insurgency like the Taliban. The Taliban might even be welcomed back under such circumstances.

One potential solution, suggested by Ambassador Alexander, was to break up the counter-clockwise progression and insert an ISAF PRT right into Kandahar so that reconstruction aid could be 'jump-started' in that critical province and city to stave off Pashtun alienation.[97] This was a way station in the Canadian journey from Kabul to Kandahar. The idea that there were growing problems with the Pashtuns in early 2004 was shunted to the side by the issues with the northerners, however. By May 2004, the first tranche of voter registration data coming in from the south indicated things were not good: 75% of the voters registered were from the north, with only 25% from the south.[98] Only then did some members of the international community sit up and take notice.

Those people missed what was going on right under their noses in Kabul. A whole "front" of the war was being fought in the mosques and between religious authorities throughout Afghanistan. In May 2004, ISAF and CFC-A analysts noted that there was a dramatic increase in reports of anti-western speeches in the mosques around Kabul. Speakers from Pakistan were being brought in to talk regularly. As Commander ISAF correctly put it, "In a society that lacks television and other mass media channels, Mullahs are important and influential…it is imperative to monitor the Mullah situation as continued anti-western speeches could have a destabilizing effect on the security situation."[99] ISAF never developed a coherent approach to religious engagement – not by 2011 and certainly not in 2004.

The coalition was lucky to have the National Ulema 'in support', as it were. The National Ulema was the senior Islamic religious body in Afghanistan and it intersected with the judicial system at all levels. After due consideration of the Constitutional Loya Jirga, the National Ulema produced a public declaration of support for the Afghan government on 22 May 2004. The Ulema supported women's rights, it condemned drug trafficking, and strongly supported free elections.[100] When the Ulema publicly supported Karzai against the regional power brokers in July 2004, some in ISAF understood the importance of the event but most did not.[101] Through this was a major vote of confidence from the religious community, neither ISAF nor the international community fully recognized or fully exploited its importance.

That said, the mosque speech campaign was clearly an organized information operation conducted by someone on the other side of the Durand Line. It was not spontaneous, but it was also feeding on something. By June 2004, voter registration teams in the Pashtun south and east were getting attacked – and in the northern Pashtun enclave of Konduz.[102] As for guerrilla operations, the main problem areas were Khost, Oruzgan, and Zabul provinces. There were constant shootings, kidnappings, and other outrages directed against aid workers and voter registration personnel. On 16 June 2004, two gunmen on a motorcycle assassinated the Director of Refugees in Kandahar province.

Cutting across all of this was the stand up by the British and U.S. State Department of the Afghan Central Poppy Eradication Force, a Ministry of the Interior organization. The CPEF rollout was supposed to be in Wardak province. Reports from local people in Wardak, once the force started operating, were not good. The combined effects of the DDR programme on units in Wardak and the effects of poppy eradication generated a high level of agitation among the Pashtun population in Wardak who saw themselves as being unfairly targeted by the government and its supporters. This resulted in violence directed against police and the Central Poppy Eradication Force. General Wardak withdrew the eradication force and plans were put in place to send it to a non-Pashtun area so that the government could be seen to be "fair."[103]

The conditions for a Pashtun-based insurgency were starting to develop and precursor situations to what would later be encountered in southern Afghanistan existed in 2004. A religious dimension to the development of the country was being missed. Poppy eradication and lack of balanced approach to reconstruction were generating grievances within part of the population. A large percentage of a crucial part of the population was not participating in voter registration. These were some of the indicators. General Wardak noted in a July 2004 briefing that:

> The coalition's image of invincibility firmly established in 2001, was wearing off as the Taliban achieved small successes. This raises the issue of the point in time that those you have come to help begin to see you as part of the problem. This analysis is also pertinent for ISAF.[104]

Few could have predicted the violent events of 2006 at this time but the warning signs were emerging.

Operation DIANA and the Embedded Training Team

Back in April 2004, Col Tremblay and his staff were concerned about the status of the ETT. At this point, the ETT was working with 4th Kandak, and 13 of the 15 kandaks that were under training by TF Phoenix had already deployed outside Kabul in one way or another. Canadian policy did not allow the Canadian ETT to deploy. Col Tremblay saw that there were increasing problems with this decision:

> Removal of the CA ETT from its Kandak adds a further complicating factor at a difficult juncture for the unit. Given that the relationship between the CA ETT members and the Kandak has taken time to develop, the introduction of a different nation's ETT element may affect that Kandak's confidence and lead to reduced efficiency.[105]

Canadian interests were a serious factor. Tremblay anticipated that ISAF and OEF were going to merge at some point and, if that occurred the excuse that the Canadian ETT was ISAF and therefore limited to Kabul would drop away. In his and others' view, this mission was a high profile task for Canada and had great saliency with allies, Canada was exposed to a greater variety of Afghan officials, it was media-positive and a valuable experience for Canadian soldiers. Prophetically, Col Tremblay noted that "If the restrictions cannot be lifted, than the CA ETT must seek another task since it will be of little use."[106]

Col Tremblay then had a pointed meeting with the Americans at TF Phoenix. The American command, CFC-A, was going to use all Afghan National Army resources as part of its Voter Registration and Election operations plan, and therefore the ETTs had to deploy with them. 4th Kandak was scheduled for Mazar-e Sharif. What was Canada going to do? Col Tremblay put in the request for Operation DIANA, the anticipated Canadian ETT deployment to Mazar-e Sharif. He emphasized that the threat was medium, not high, that there was factional fighting, not terrorism, and that the kandak would be doing framework patrolling. "Recent movements of Afghan National Army troops by the Afghan Ministry of Defence has returned the region to a reasonable level of stability" in the past and all of the militia commanders knew that the kandak was supported by the Americans and would be apprehensive about taking it on. There was no immediate reply.

Photo Credit: Author

Conceived in 2003 and finally manned in 2004, the Canadian Army contributed a portion of its deployed forces towards the Afghan National Army Design Team and later an Embedded Training Team with the Afghan National Army. This was the start of a 15-year commitment to assisting the Afghan National Army in its professionalization.

The deteriorating situation in Balkh, Herat, and Konduz provinces increasingly drew ISAF's attention away from Kabul. The Ministry of Defence planned to deploy an Afghan National Army kandak from 1st Brigade to Mazar-e Sharif as part of President Karzai's move to remind the antagonists in Balkh that there was a central government in place. The presence of the Afghan National Army in the provincial capital along with the presence of the new British-led PRT would, in theory, have a calming effect on the situation. 4th Kandak was selected – the kandak with the Canadian ETT. The Canadian National Command Element worked on the plan to support the ETT if it deployed to Mazar-e Sharif. Another request went to the DCDS in Ottawa for approval. There was no positive reply, and there would not be even a negative one until 1 August 2004, months after the initial warning that Canada might be needed.[107]

Indeed, some were not in favour of these and similar deployments. When the task force staff looked at the risk involved in deploying the ETT, those who were opposed argued that the medical evacuation requirements could not be met. Furthermore, the

NDHQ restrictions on the number of flying hours for the Canadian CC-130 transports based at Camp Mirage meant that someone else's airlift would have to be used and the reliability of such an airlift was questionable. TF KABUL was at odds with LGen Hillier from a philosophical perspective. Some in TF KABUL saw LGen Hillier as exceeding the brief he had been given by the CDS and believed that Hillier was angling to make the Canadian contingent ISAF's "fire brigade" for the whole country. Some even disagreed with ambassador Chris Alexander's leveraging of TF KABUL in the larger strategic game in Kabul and thought that Canada should play as limited a role as possible.[108]

On 4 July 2004, 400 militia soldiers from Atta's 7 Corps replaced the police checkpoints throughout Mazar-e Sharif and ejected the police from their headquarters. The Chief of Police for Balkh province was barricaded in his home. Over in Herat, Ismael Khan dismissed the provincial Chief of Security, who was recently appointed by the Ministry of the Interior in Kabul. Ismael Khan's bodyguards forcibly removed the staffers and officers from the National Directorate of Security office in Herat. Though some ISAF analysts did not see the two events as connected, they were serious simultaneous challenges to the Afghan Transitional Administration.[109]

The situation in Mazar-e Sharif calmed down through negotiation. The new Chief of Police, a Pashtun from Kandahar, as it turned out, was accused of narcotics activity and Atta's people wanted him out. Whether he was a competitor or not was unclear. The situation was still volatile. The Canadian ETT and the NCE repeated the request for authorization to deploy with their kandak to Mazar-e Sharif. The mission was to work with the kandak in establishing framework operations like vital point security, patrolling, and vehicle checkpoints in the city. The request was not approved.[110] One must ask the question: if the kandak with Canadian embedded trainers had deployed earlier, would the Balkh coup have taken place at all?

Over in Herat, the situation was different – and worse.[111] Amanullah Khan Zadran, a regional militia commander and long-time rival of Ismael Khan, mobilized his forces in Shindand and started to move on Herat. It was like Atta versus Dostum all over again just in a different location. The Ministry of Defence working with TF Phoenix worked up a Karzai-endorsed plan to deploy 1st Brigade to Shindand on nine C-130s. The sudden arrival of Afghan National Army troops, not militia forces, was gauged to produce a calming effect on the situation. Once again, the Canadian ETT was prohibited by Ottawa from accompanying its kandak to Herat.[112] 1 500 troops from 1st Brigade flew in late August 2004 and the two Khans' forces stopped fighting. This bought time for Karzai to work on his relationship with Ismael Khan, who was eventually "promoted" to a position in Kabul and removed from the situation later that fall.[113]

Canada had an opportunity to play a positive role in these critical events and improve Canada's credibility and leverage through the deployment of 20 personnel – and chose not to on two occasions because of a risk-averse outlook. Canada's credibility with the Afghan National Army was damaged, especially with the troops that were being trained by the Canadian ETT: the ETT's morale suffered as a result.[114] The long delay did not endear the Canadian ETT contingent with TF Phoenix and its chain of command either, who then had to backfill the gap with their own scarce resources.

The reticence of Ottawa to fully support ETT operations when all was said and done struck the task force leadership as incongruous with Canadian objectives in Kabul:

> It is felt that ISAF's future exit strategy will depend on the handing over of security to the Afghans themselves. Kabul City Police, the National Directorate of Security, and the Afghan National Army organizations will have to take over Kabul security in order to permit ISAF to put in place its PRT plan.[115]

Having a capable and confident Afghan National Army was part of this and the provincial operations contributed to that end-state. Indeed, given the problems NATO was having finding 500 people to man Kabul Afghanistan International Airport, one would have thought more Canadian effort would have been expended at this time, increasing Canada's training capacity vis-à-vis the Afghan National Army and the ETTs. There is a level of irony here given Canada's later emphasis on Operational Mentor and Liaison Team operations and the complete shift of the Canadian Army mission to army and police training eight years later in 2011.

Another Coup d'État?

The ISAF units in Kabul continued with their framework operations and continued to disrupt HiG, Al Qaeda and Taliban cells on a weekly basis. Operation GONDOLA was 60% complete. This was enough to put a serious dent in the power broker's military capacities to threaten the democratic process in the city but there were still some problem commanders and units. 717th Protection Regiment, for example, was implicated in narcotics trafficking and was affiliated with Fahim. When the United Kingdom-led counter-narcotics police confronted the commander of the regiment after discovering 42 kilograms of opium in his vehicle at a checkpoint, the general in charge of counter-narcotics police had his nose broken in a scrap between the two forces. Not surprisingly, 717th Protection Regiment was also DDR-resistant. ISTAR resources were allocated to keep an eye on this formation.[116]

In the waning days of Roto 1, BGen Jocelyn Lacroix attended a dinner where several Afghan generals were present. Hamid Karzai was in the process of moving Fahim out of the Ministry of Defence and into a new Vice President position. Lacroix informally learned that there were concerns at the Ministry of Defence that Tajik AMFs might react badly to the move.

One week later, information came in from the ISTAR organization that there were unusual movements at 717th Protection Regiment. This was upgraded to a possible mobilization of 717th Protection Regiment, which was positioned near the Ministry of the Interior, and had personnel known to be involved in narcotics trafficking connected to Fahim. ISAF forces were the only ones stationed between 717th Regiment's base and the Presidential Palace. BGen Lacroix decided to deploy KMNB elements to protect the Ministry of the Interior headquarters as a precautionary move. Maj Andrew Zdunich's Recce Squadron, supported by Spanish combat engineers, moved discreetly to the headquarters while KMNB HQ spun up Contingency Plans BASTION and BRITTANY with the American CJTF-76. American special forces discreetly moved into the Presidential Palace, while ISAF forces patrolled outside and the Dutch AH-64s orbited downtown. Recce Squadron and the TUAV were instructed to keep an eye on the 717th compound. The AH-64s were told to destroy any armoured vehicle moving through the gate with a Hellfire missile. This would block the gate and buy time to contact the 717th regimental commander – or whoever was controlling him – and get the regiment to back down. Fortunately, none of the tanks proceeded to deploy outside the compound once they saw the orbiting attack helicopters and the tension receded.[117]

Extending Operation ATHENA in Kabul: October 2003-August 2004

As we will recall back in early 2003, Canada accepted ISAF command and agreed to maintain its contributions until August 2004. It was NATO's responsibility to take over ISAF with a non-national NATO headquarters after that. Canada eventually maintained a presence with ISAF in Kabul for nearly a year and a half before agreeing to relinquish it. Why was this the case? Canada did not want to remain in Kabul, wanted NATO and its members to accept greater responsibility, and looked toward a PRT commitment elsewhere as an exit strategy. In October 2003, the Minister, the CDS and Deputy Minister re-examined the various commitments and options. A regional 'package' of a Canadian ship to support a U.S. Navy carrier battle group and some commitment in Afghanistan was seen to be the best Canadian contribution. The preferred Afghanistan component of that contribution, after the drawdown of the forces in Kabul, consisted of the ETT and Canadian staff at CJTF-180 (later CJTF-76), "U.S. requests for other support to Operation ENDURING FREEDOM" (anodyne language for special operations forces),

and the Operation ACCIUS commitment to UNAMA to support the demobilization process. Contributing to the UN mission in Iraq was another possibility. As for PRTs in Afghanistan, there was "Pressure for countries to support this U.S. initiative in regional centres throughout Afghanistan. Significant security, medical, and logistics concerns have to be addressed before a CF-led PRT could be foreseen." The situation in Kabul was still volatile and the Canadian leadership had an inkling that extending beyond August 2004 was another possibility.[118]

There was a great deal of dissatisfaction in Canadian circles regarding NATO's inability to generate forces to replace the Canadian contingent. From October into November 2003, there was no movement whatsoever. The CDS wrote SACEUR, General James Jones, to remind him that Canada would withdraw in August 2004, but Canada was also examining "residual capabilities." General Henault reminded General Jones that "NATO nations must continue to rise to the task of generating the forces necessary for mission success, especially if ISAF is to assume greater responsibilities outside of Kabul."[119] Unstated but implied was the question: could a Canadian 'residual capability' act as a catalyst for the process?

The high-level ISAF Strategic Coordination Group and a Canadian interdepartmental group met in December 2003 to plot a way forward. Pressure from Commander ISAF-in-waiting, LGen Rick Hillier, to get a Canadian posture articulated sooner rather than later, drove the discussion. DFAIT suggested having Canada take over Kabul airport, while other options like a PRT and extending the existing commitment were debated. National Defence dug in its heels on extension at current levels and was not supportable given the manpower situation and emphasized the need for an 18-month strategic pause. The Kabul airport option had not been examined from an operational perspective, but unstated in the meeting was that it would not be salient in the Afghanistan coalition environment. Many participants seemed to know but did not openly state that the PRT option looked good – except CIDA. The CIDA representative implied that CIDA needed a 10-year "policy horizon" before it could say or do anything related to a PRT, and "an approved policy statement" was needed. DFAIT representatives chimed in and said that they needed a "five-year horizon." The CF and DND representatives replied that the PRT option was not specifically a military initiative "but one which is developed to bring necessary Government of Canada assets to bear in a clearly mandated manner to address a specific need in a specific geographical location. PRT is not a DND option but a Government of Canada strategic policy statement." Translation: National Defence and the Canadian Forces were not going to go out on a limb on PRTs as an exit strategy unless CIDA and DFAIT joined them on it. So a PRT as an exit strategy or solution for the ISAF Kabul problem was not on the table unless the elected government understood and accepted that commitment, with all of its implications.[120]

NATO finally replied to the CDS early in January 2004. SACEUR's planners were interested in "residual capabilities":

> Our priority would be to see your HUMINT and if at all possible, your ISTAR capability being retained. The knowledge and personal contacts developed by your intelligence community have been built up over time and will continue to increase in value. Although modest in number, it will be difficult to replace this key capability in intelligence-driven operations.

This was very interesting. NATO planners valued the combined Recce Squadron/HUMINT/ASIC capabilities more than an infantry battle group. From a Canadian perspective, however, those capabilities were essentially "enablers" and not enough to "buy" saliency in the coalition. NATO wanted to leverage Canadian capability, but what would Canada receive in return? That was not clear. SACEUR was told in early February that the Government of Canada would examine the "residual capabilities."[121]

Pressure was also building from within the Army. The planning and preparation process to either maintain or withdraw a force could not be grown overnight. Most policy makers were unable to grasp the long lead times needed to deploy or remove equipment, establish or disestablish infrastructure. The Canadian Army was legally unable to just lock the doors and walk away from overseas infrastructure, mostly because of Canadian environmental legislation. If the existing force was going to be replaced, its replacements needed direction now, in January 2004, not in August. The pressure was so great that the CDS sent an unprecedented forces-wide message explaining the timelines and the decision-making process he had to go through before he could release a warning order for Roto 2. On 9 February, the issue had to be briefed at the Cabinet Operations Committee. On 10 February, the "3 D Ministers" (DND, DFAIT, CIDA) had to make a presentation to the Global Affairs Cabinet Committee that was chaired by the Prime Minister. Then NATO would release its Statement of Requirements for ISAF on 13 February. Things might change. The plan was to have Cabinet sign a memo on the future force structure and commitment. On 24 February, the Global Affairs Committee would consider what Canada would contribute to the NATO Statement of Requirements. That decision would be briefed to NATO on 5 March at a Force Generation Conference. If all went smoothly, of course.[122]

NATO ramped up the pressure. The NATO Secretary General wrote to the Minister of National Defence, explaining that the current shortfall was Kabul airport manning but the future issue was that ISAF needed people beyond that. Notably, he pointed out that "As ISAF's expansion is based on the concept of additional PRTs, I also take this opportunity to urge those of you who are considering the deployment of PRTs to accelerate that process."[123]

By March 2004, little was accomplished. The Kabul airport manning issue (it was only manned at 65%), and now the need for a Role 2 hospital, were unaddressed. If Canada pulled out, there would be no Target Acquisition Radar capability, no electronic warfare/SIGINT capability, and the Military Police Company would be undermanned. There would be a gap in UAV coverage, and the force would be short a battle group. NATO ISAF was now scheduled to assume control of five more PRTs in northern Afghanistan, an area that was now demonstrably getting worse and needed attention.

The idea that Eurocorps, a non-NATO formation, might take over as the NATO ISAF HQ in Kabul and the Franco-German Brigade might assume control of KMNB emerged sometime in March 2004. Another plan to have a British headquarters take over KMNB under the Eurocorps was scotched by the French; this apparent solution was gathering momentum by the spring of 2004.[124]

By May 2004, Canada was leaning in the direction of maintaining forces in Kabul beyond August and eventually announced that Recce Squadron would stay. There were several factors involved, but the driver appears to have been the problems of catalyzing the voter registration process in the spring and the centrality of the elections in the future stability of the country (that is, Afghanistan, not Canada). There was also pressure from a variety of quarters to keep the battalion and the other capabilities. NATO was one, but both the British and the Americans approached Canada and asked Canada to delay withdrawal. This was "driven by concerns over the precarious security situation in the Afghan countryside (Kabul is relatively secure) in the lead-up to the elections now scheduled for September…."[125]

British Prime Minister Tony Blair even wrote Prime Minister Paul Martin. He welcomed Canada's decision to keep forces in Kabul for the 2004 elections and praised the Canadian soldiers: "I pay tribute to their achievements." Blair encouraged Canada to take on a PRT as well as "It would be a further demonstration of Canada's continuing commitment our shared goals of regeneration in Afghanistan."[126]

Keeping the same commitment level in ISAF was out of the question, however, according to Canadian Forces planners. Even if Canada kept a battalion in Kabul, it could not deploy outside Kabul because it lacked helicopters. There would be "adverse effects on the Canadian Forces programme to retrain and re-equip for future operations." The operations tempo was so high that Canada needed 12 to 18 months before it could mount the same level of commitment. The Canadian Army was still committed to the NATO-led Stabilization Force in Bosnia and had forces in Haiti. The attitude in the Canadian bureaucracy was one of frustration – Canada, many planners believed, had committed more than its share to Afghanistan and others were not doing so.[127]

As for a Canadian PRT, Cabinet asked for a recommendation. The interdepartmental policy group agreed that "Given the security situation in Afghanistan and the heavy investment Canada has already made, there is a logic to Canada assuming responsibility for a PRT" – but not until August 2005.[128] Operation ATHENA Roto 2 was a "go." Canada would remain in Kabul with a "residual capability."

ENDNOTES

1. HQ KMNB SITREP (1 January 2004); HQ ISAF SITREP (1 January 2004); HQ KMNB SITREP (2 January 2004).
2. HQ KMNB SITREP (16 January 2004).
3. HQ KMNB SITREP (1 January 2004).
4. NCE SITREP (7 January 2004).
5. HQ KMNB SITREP (14 January 2004) (15 January 2004) (18 January 2004).
6. HQ KMNB SITREP (15 January 2004); HQ ISAF SITREP (15 January 2004); NCE SITREP (17 January 2004).
7. Message to DCDS, "Op TSUNAMI" (21 January 2004).
8. HQ KMNB SITREP (27 January 2004).
9. NCE, "Special Assessment SIED 27 January 2004" (27 January 2004); "Board of Inquiry-Kabul Suicide Bomber" (12 March 2004).
10. Ibid.
11. HQ KMNB SITREP (27 January 2004); Interview with MGen Jocelyn Lacroix (Ottawa, 15 March 2010).
12. Leslie interview.
13. NCE, KMNB and HQ ISAF SITREPS (27 January 2004) (28 January 2004) (29 January 2004) (1 February 2004).
14. KMNB SITREP (6 February 2004).
15. Interview with Major David Warnke, Kandahar (8 February 2009).
16. "J3 Engineer Visit to TFK-10-16 January 2004-Comments for DCDS" (24 February 2004).
17. According to Colonel Sylvain Sirois, the decision to cut CF support to countrywide EOD in Canada and the subsequent blending of cultures between engineers and ammo techs to save money in the early 1990s had a deleterious effect. Sirois telephone interview (11 January 2011).
18. Message, "Implementation Order: CF Radio Controlled Improvised Explosive Devices Electronic Counter Measures" (30 March 2004).
19. Jon M. Anderson, "The New Wizard War: Challenges and Opportunities for Electronic Warfare in the Information Age." U.S. Naval War College (6 November 2007) at http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?Location =U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf&AD=ADA476476.
20. On 9 February 2004, LGen Rick Hillier of Canada took command, with Maj Gen Werner Korte of Germany as deputy.
21. Telephone interview with BGen Alain Tremblay (13 January 2011).
22. Telephone interview with Leslie (11 January 2011); Sirois interview.
23. Tremblay interview.

24. Tremblay and Sirois interviews.
25. Sirois interview.
26. Message Tremblay to COS J3, "Training of the Afghan National Army Embedded Training Team (ETT) Op PHOENIX" (11 February 2004).
27. NCE SITREP (29 February 2004).
28. In December 2003, the North Atlantic Council authorized SACEUR, General James Jones, to initiate the expansion of ISAF by taking over command of the German-led PRT in Konduz. On 31 December 2003, the military component of the Konduz PRT was placed under ISAF command as a pilot project and first step in the expansion of the mission.
29. Rick Hillier, *A Soldier First: Bullets, Bureaucrats and the Politics of War* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2009), p. 258.
30. Message TFK to NDHQ, "Op MAELSTROM-Fr Bn Gp Task" (10 February 2004); NCE SITREP (15 February 2004); Lacroix interview.
31. Lacroix interview. Whether this reflected an increase in the number of terrorists available in Kabul to be caught or if it reflected an increase in the ability of KMNB and allied agencies to go after them needs more detailed examination.
32. Lacroix interview.
33. "Op SPEED" (30 March 2004); NCE SITREP (1 April 2004); "Op SPEED-SSE Report" (3 April 2004).
34. HQ ISAF SITREP (31 March 2004); NCE SITREP (1 April 2004).
35. "Operation ATHENA Task Force Commander's End Tour Report" (4 August 2004).
36. Ibid.
37. "Présentation 3eR22eR Gp Bataillon" (29 March 2004).
38. NCE SITREP (19 February 2004); HQ KMNB SITREP (23 February 2004); TF Engineer to Commander TFK, "Operational Readiness Declaration of the Improvised Explosive Device Destruction Teams (IEDD)" (4 March 2004).
39. Memorandum to DCDS from COS j3 "Op ATHENA-op COBRA Update" (27 February 2004); NCE SITREP (29 February 2004); NCE SITREP (1 March 2004); NCE SITREP (3 March 2004).
40. NCE SITREP (29 February 2004).
41. HQ KMNB SITREP (27 February 2004); HQ KMNB SITREP (5 March 2004); HQ KMNB SITREP (9 March 2004).
42. HQ KMNB SITREP (5 April 2004).
43. Memorandum COS J3 to DCDS, "Op ATHENA-LUVW Fielding to TFK" (24 February 2004).
44. Message NCE to NDHQ, "Op SCORPION" (26 March 2004); NCE SITREP (29 March 2004); "Op SCORPION-SSE Report" (3 April 2004).
45. HQ KMNB SITREP (30 March 2004); NCE SITREP (30 March 2004).
46. 3 R22eR Battalion Group, "TFK Community Improvement Programme (CIP) End-Tour Report" (30 July 2004).
47. Tremblay interview. Tremblay claims the CIP contributed to the prevention of attacks on Camp Julien. Another view was that the comparative lack of aggressive 3eR22eR activity in the AOR meant that the Canadian contingent wasn't getting into the hair of those who would want to "signal" the Canadians using violence, therefore there was nothing to be gained by attacking the camp. KMNB's increasing aggressive counter-terrorism operations with the police and NDS would also have had something to do with reducing the probability of attacks on Camp Julien.

48. "TFK Community Improvement Programme (CIP) End Rotation Report" (30 July 2004).
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. "Op ATHENA Task Force Commander's Mid-Tour Report" (7 May 2004).
52. Ibid.
53. Memoranda between DCDS and COS J3 and NCE (7 June 2004) (10 June 2004).
54. As discussed in *Confronting the Chaos*.
55. In November 2003, Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A) was established as the U.S.-led, coalition headquarters for Afghanistan formation that directed all OEF operations in Afghanistan. CTJF-180 was restructured as a subordinate organization of CFC-A. CFC-A reported in turn to CENTCOM.
56. HQ ISAF SITREP (11 February 2004) (12 February 2004) (19 February 2004). JEMB Fact Sheet, "Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council Elections Afghanistan 2005."
57. HQ ISAF SITREP (18 February 2004).
58. HQ ISAF SITREP (2 March 2004) (5 March 2004).
59. HQ ISAF SITREP (1 April 2004) (4 April 2004).
60. HQ ISAF SITREP (28 February 2004).
61. "Final Report of Meetings: The Military Committee in Chiefs of Staff Session: Critical Shortfalls for CJSOR" (5-6 May 2004).
62. Letter SECGEN NATO to Canadian Ambassador (7 May 2004).
63. HQ ISAF SITREP (16 April 2004).
64. HQ ISAF SITREP (14 February 2004).
65. HQ ISAF SITREP (16 February 2004).
66. Sirois interview.
67. ISAF HQ SITREP (3 March 2004); KMNB SITREP (3 March 2004); ISAF SITREP (8 March 2004).
68. HQ ISAF SITREP (9 March 2004); HQ ISAF SITREP (11 March 2004).
69. HQ ISAF SITREP (25 March 2004). See also Barbara Stapleton, "Disarming the Militias: DDR and DIAG and the Implications for Peace Building," in Markus Hakansson (ed), *Peacebuilding in Afghanistan* (2009).
70. HQ ISAF SITREP (31 March 2004).
71. Ibid.
72. COMISAF Update (9 May 2004).
73. COMISAF Update (12 May 2004).
74. COMISAF Update (19 May 2004).
75. Ibid. HQ ISAF SITREP (19 May 2004).
76. HQ ISAF SITREPS (10 May 2004) (23 May 2004) (2 June 2004).
77. HQ ISAF SITREPS (29 May 2004) (3 June 2004) (5 June 2004) (14 June 2004).

78. Lacroix interview.
79. COS J3 to DCDS, “Op ATHENA-Request to Deploy Forces Outside of the ISAF Area of Operations” (14 May 2004).
80. KMNB, “Op HERMES Operations Order” (May 2004).
81. Ibid. Lacroix interview.
82. Ibid.
83. KMNB SITREP (13 May 2004); NCE to DCDS “Op HERMES-Phase One Koh-e Safi” (21 May 2004).
84. KMNB SITREP (31 May 2004). Lacroix interview.
85. HQ ISAF SITREP (27 June 2004).
86. NCE SITREPS (June 2004).
87. HQ ISAF SITREP (19 May 2004).
88. ISAF HQ SITREP (5 June 2004); HQ ISAF SITREP (13 June 2004).
89. HQ ISAF SITREP (17 June 2004).
90. NCE SITREP (2 April 2004).
91. NCE SITREP (31 March 2004); COMISAF Update (31 March 2004). NCE “Post-Op Report: Op DAMOCLES II” (10 May 2004).
92. NCE SITREP (16 May 2004).
93. HQ ISAF SITREP (27 May 2004); NCE SITREP and message NCE to NDHQ “Op PENELOPE” (26 May 2004); HQ ISAF SITREP (31 March 2004).
94. “Operation ATHENA Board of Inquiry Rotation 1 3 R22eR Battalion Group” (6 August 2004).
95. NCE SITREP (25 June 2004); Lacroix interview. BGen Lacroix explained that he was told by US OGA personnel that Idema was working for them. Others implied that Idema was rogue and was working with Fahim. Still others said all three. It was next to impossible to tell what was really going on. Idema died in Mexico in 2012 of a terminal illness.
96. COMISAF and CFC-A meeting (25 January 2004).
97. Ibid.
98. COMISAF Update (12 May 2004).
99. COMISAF Update (9 May 2004).
100. HQ ISAF SITREP (22 May 2004).
101. ISAF HQ SITREP (15 July 2004).
102. HQ ISAF SITREP (10 June 2004).
103. COMISAF Update (23 May 2004); HQ ISAF SITREP (27 June 2004).
104. ISAF HQ SITREP (7 July 2004).
105. Tremblay to DL, “Canadian Embedded Training Team” (16 April 2004).
106. Ibid.
107. NCE SITREP (16 May 2004); message NDHQ to DL “CA ETT Deployment to Mazar-e Sharif” (1 August 2004).

108. Tremblay interview.
109. HQ ISAF SITREP (4 July 2004).
110. Message NCE to NDHQ, "CA ETT Mazar-e Sharif Approval" (4 August 2004).
111. The fascinating and deep politics of Herat are beyond the scope of this study, unfortunately.
112. See Maloney, *Confronting the Chaos*.
113. Ibid.
114. "Operation ATHENA Task Force Commander's End Tour Report" (4 August 2004).
115. Ibid.
116. HQ ISAF SITREP (29 June 2004).
117. Lacroix interview.
118. Letter CDS and DM to MND, "Future of CF Operation in Southwest Asia" (8 October 2003).
119. Letter Henault to Jones (2 November 2003).
120. Minutes: ISAF Strategic Coordination Group Meeting (18 December 2003).
121. CDS to D SACEUR, "Canadian Withdrawal from ISAF" (4 February 2004).
122. CDS to distribution list, "Op ATHENA-Canadian Contribution Post-August 2004" (19 January 2004).
123. Letter NATO SECGEN to MND (23 February 2004).
124. "Trip Report-NATO ISAF VI Force Generation Conference, 11 March 2004" (11 March 2004).
125. Minutes of an interdepartmental meeting "Afghanistan: PRTs and ISAF Expansion" (28 May 2004).
126. Letter PM Tony Blair to PM Paul Martin (18 May 2004).
127. Minutes of an interdepartmental meeting "Afghanistan: PRTs and ISAF Expansion" (28 May 2004).
128. Ibid.

'RESIDUAL CAPABILITIES':

OPERATION ATHENA IN KABUL, SEPTEMBER 2004-MAY 2005

The Canadian Army maintained a presence in Kabul after the withdrawal of the bulk of the force in August 2004. Dubbed the "residual capability" by the planners, the new but drastically reduced iterations of TF Kabul continued, in various ways, to contribute to the stability of the capital. Unlike previous rotations, however, the new force was not salient enough for Canada to retain the same high level of influence that it enjoyed in 2003-2004. In effect, the "residual capability" rotations acted as a bridge between Kabul and Kandahar. The difficulty of writing about them lies in the routine nature of their operations and the series of disparate threads left over from the previous rotations. In most cases, framework operations conducted by recce squadrons were nearly identical to those conducted during Roto 0 and 1, for example. That said, it is patently unfair to completely overlook the contributions of Canadian soldiers who deployed with these rotations, especially given the risk involved in a dangerous environment.

For the most part, the importance of their contributions related to the security operations surrounding the 2004 presidential elections. The new Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, which finally replaced the Afghan Transitional Administration, and formed the basis of development and reconstruction activities in subsequent years, garnered the comparatively high level of legitimacy. Those activities remain questionable in their effectiveness over the long term even as this history is produced. It must be understood, however, that the spirit of optimism that existed then was very real; there was a carnival-like atmosphere that surrounded the 2004 elections. It is possible to track a trajectory starting with the 2003 Constitutional Loya Jirga, through to the 2004 Presidential Elections, to the 2005 Provincial Elections, and see positive Canadian Army involvement throughout the course of that trajectory. At the same time, Canada's role in Afghanistan was evolving as the soldiers of TF Kabul continued with their security missions. The other major aspect of the final Operation ATHENA rotations was the progressive draw-down of the Kabul forces and their relocation to their new home in Kandahar province.

Operation ATHENA Roto 2: Organization

Canadian objectives remained the same for this rotation, that is, "To prevent Afghanistan from relapsing into a failed state where terrorists and terrorist organizations would be provided safe haven."[1] And, as before, the force remit was to "Assist ISAF and Afghanistan

security institutions in ensuring a secure environment within the Kabul [area of operation] with a view to facilitating Afghan national development." As we have seen, however, Operation ATHENA was also maintained in Kabul to keep Canada's options open and to maintain a 'foot on the ground' in Afghanistan as much as anything, so there was an impetus to retain as much situational awareness as possible.[2]

Col Jim Ellis brought in a task force that was significantly different from previous Operation ATHENA rotations. The employment of certain elements of TF Kabul had several command and control complications imposed on them by circumstances and design. It is critical to note here that Operation ATHENA Roto 2, with its 711 personnel, was not structured to handle Voter Registration and Election operations, let alone heavy weapons cantonment, DDR, or many of the other Kabul area activities that were already familiar. Recall that the elections were supposed to take place during Roto 1 but were delayed. The DCDS and staff would not entertain increasing the manpower cap for Roto 2. As a result, there was a significant amount of back-and-forth communication between Kabul and Ottawa over what amounted to the employment, addition, or subtraction of small numbers of soldiers.[3]

The main effort was the employment of the recce squadron group (sometimes referred to as Surveillance Squadron) led by Maj Derek Macaulay. This sub-unit was cut to KMNB, now commanded by the Franco-German Brigade, a non-NATO headquarters that replaced the Canadian-led headquarters. Recce Squadron continued to use Coyote vehicles but was augmented with snipers, engineers and an infantry platoon from 3 PPCLI in what was termed the "Close Reconnaissance Role." This was a doctrinal experiment whereby the Coyotes would identify a target and the platoon, mounted in G-Wagons, would investigate and report.[4]

Photo Credit: Author

Camp Julien remained an operational camp after the bulk of Canadian troops were withdrawn in 2004. An important facility was the deep well and water point established by Canadian engineers for use by the population. Here two water trucks replenish at the 'tap.'

The All Source Intelligence Centre under Maj Dave Travers, however, remained an undeclared national asset. The TUAVs were all gone and there was a reduced Canadian human intelligence organization. The ISTAR Company concept employed in Roto 0 was now defunct, along with the synergies it produced.[5] There were some initial problems as the ASIC was not fully manned but more importantly, there was some loss of continuity during the previous rotation, which "did not continue the liaison associations established by Roto 0 for reasons beyond their control. Past contacts have been lost which are proving difficult to re-establish."[6] The new ASIC worked hard to re-establish those relationships and ultimately became "vital to [Commander TF Kabul's] situational awareness and were able to make up for shortfalls in intelligence support from ISAF and KMNB HQ."[7]

TF Kabul also had 11 Field Squadron from 1 Combat Engineer Regiment, which was responsible for IEDD and EOD operations, although this was all starting to blend. The introduction of a small number of Icarus electronic countermeasures jamming sets to form electronic countermeasure detachments was handled through a slight reorganization. 11 Field Squadron contributed to the ISAF Immediate Response Team rotations when IED or EOD incidents occurred. Also of significance were the relationships 11 Field Squadron maintained and expanded with a variety of allied organizations who were dealing with the relatively new IED threat at the time. This included the Kabul EOD Coordination Centre, the United Nations Mine Action Center for Afghanistan, and the newly established combined explosives exploitation cell, an American counter-IED organization. Canadian combat engineers in later rotations benefited from that relationship and built on it as well.[8]

Canada's other main effort was maintaining Camp Julien. Camp Julien remained the only ISAF facility on the other side of the inter-city mountain chain. As such, agreements were made to support KMNB's Battle Group 3, which technically replaced 3eR22eR Battalion Group. Battle Group 3 included a Belgian SAS Company (not special operations forces but essentially a light-mounted recce unit) and a Hungarian mechanized infantry company incongruously equipped with Soviet BTR-80s mounting 20mm cannons. A 12-man Norwegian CIMIC group also operated from the camp and the Slovenian contingent continued with its operations.

Camp Julien also continued to host the Canadian ETT, led by Maj Brian Hynes, as well as 50 American soldiers serving with TF Phoenix working across the road at the Afghan National Army training camp. In time, when the Election Support Force deployed to Kabul in October 2004, an additional 100+ Americans from TF Apache set up temporary living facilities near the abandoned Canadian artillery and TUAV launch positions.

Photo Credit: Author

Camp Julien hosted numerous other allied contingents in late 2004. These included a Belgian reconnaissance unit, an American training unit, a Slovenian reconnaissance unit, and a Hungarian Army armoured unit equipped with modified BTR-80 vehicles.

Supporting all of this fell to the 92-man NSE under LCol Charles Lamarre and 500 CANCAP contractors (note that there were nearly as many contractors on the camp as Canadian soldiers). Most importantly, Camp Julien had a Role 2+ medical facility and six Bison ambulances from 1 Field Ambulance, the only such capability south of the mountains, and the hospital had a secure helipad.[9]

Protecting Camp Julien was a significant issue as the camp had over four kilometres of HESCO bastion wall to cover. The Canadian debate over numbers of 'effectives' related to this. TF Kabul was allocated only two LAV III-based infantry platoons, with no company headquarters. One of these platoons was the QRF with sections on 5-, 15-, and 30-minute notice to move. Local agreements were made to gain a platoon from the other non-Canadian contingents, which in turn reduced their patrolling capacity in the surrounding PDs. In time, Ottawa acquiesced to permit a third LAV III platoon to deploy – but only for three months. This third platoon was sent to protect the mission draw-down team and escort convoys back and forth to Kabul airport. Other than that, a scratch operational reserve platoon of cooks, clerks, and bottle washers had to be formed to assist with camp security. The situation produced some pressure on Recce Squadron, which technically "belonged" to KMNB and had an infantry platoon.[10] It was, in effect, a balancing act with some significant risk attached to it. Indeed, it looked to some as though TF Kabul's job was to protect itself.

Roto 2 Operations

Roto 2 operations can generally be broken down into two categories: recce squadron group operations and operations designed to maintain Camp Julien security. Gone were the DDR/heavy weapons cantonment support operations. There was no Canadian area of operations anymore either; Battle Group 3 took over that battlespace. Police training dropped off. As for development and reconstruction, the flow of CIDA money was completely shut off. There was a small CIMIC detachment, however. They cobbled together the remaining $17 000 in the budget and then raised money back in Canada from the Chilliwack Rotary Club and the Knox Met Choir to support what local initiatives they could.[11]

In the run-up to the elections, ISAF expanded its area of operation in Kabul province. Known as the "ISAF Joint Operating Area," it encompassed all of those nooks and crannies that constituted ambiguities between ISAF and CFC-A operating areas. Naturally, this posed problems between Roto 2 and the DCDS staff on authorizations to deploy to the peripheries of, or outside, the ISAF joint operating area. Quite literally, neither organization was on the same page for some time, which put an end to anything resembling Operation HERMES from the previous rotation. Roto 2 tried to deploy to Sarobi district (Operation GRANITE) but was turned down. KMNB was not keen either on the Koh-e Safi operations, nor did they like the planned Operation WHISTLER and TIMBERWOLF deployments to Logar province, so the momentum developed by the Operation HERMES programme during Roto 1 essentially collapsed.[12]

During its tenure in Kabul, Roto 2 and ISAF were plagued with rocket attacks similar to the types used before. From September to October 2004, there were more than 22 recorded 107mm and 122mm rockets attacks on the city, more than in the previous year combined. This became a serious information operations issue for ISAF as Afghan and international media escalated their criticisms of the 'lack' of security in the run-up to the elections. This, of course, is exactly what the insurgents wanted but the inability of the international community, ISAF or CFC-A to develop a coordinated public response with the Afghan Transitional Administration to the criticism took its toll. Roto 2 and the recce squadron group already had Operation HORSESHOE on the books – this was the counter-rocket surveillance plan for Camp Julien where Coyotes and infantry patrols would work the mountainous rural areas west of the camp to deter attacks. When KMNB tried to use RATTLESNAKE as the basis of a larger counter-rocket deterrence plan, however, there were internal disputes with competing plans – one was Operation HUNTER, the other Operation OCTOPUS. It took some time to deconflict these operations.[13]

Photo Credit: Author

Rocket attacks increased in 2004 during the run-up to the national elections, but the city saw nothing remotely like the amount of devastation inflicted by Pakistani-backed forces in 1992-1993. This example, to the right of the Blowpipe surface-to-air missile, landed near Camp Julien but failed to detonate.

Command and Control Issues with ISAF and KMNB

The change in ISAF command from two Canadian-led headquarters to two European multinational headquarters based on non-NATO commands was challenging on several levels for the new Canadian contingent. ISAF HQ was now based on the French-led Eurocorps, while KMNB was commanded by a German-led Franco-German Brigade HQ. The vertically integrated system Canada had in place in Kabul no longer existed. At the same time, Eurocorps introduced a serious break in continuity as it struggled to adapt to the Kabul environment. The situation was replicated at KMNB, which generated problems for the recce squadron group. There were conflicting plans within KMNB as to how the squadron should be employed and, at times, these plans contradicted each other, to the consternation of Maj Macaulay and his troops. For example, one KMNB entity generated a surveillance plan positioning Coyote vehicles in key locations. This plan was suddenly replaced with a plan generated by another KMNB staff changing the name of the operation and offsetting the Coyote positions to places they chose. Which plan was to be used?[14]

Col Ellis and Commander KMNB "did not get along that well. He liked the Recce Squadron but he was always convinced that Canada was doing operations that he did not know about, that we were doing operations because we had [CANSOF] there and we had all kinds of stuff that he thought was going on. We did not. We had a couple of nose-to-nose discussions quietly behind doors on who was doing what." This was where the restrictive command and control arrangements from the DCDS became useful. Col Ellis and his staff did not want KMNB "sending half a recce squadron through an un-cleared area" where terrorists might be operating "just to grab a few rifles."[15]

KMNB did not have access to the Canadian ASIC, in part because France and Germany were not part of the Five Eyes intelligence sharing framework. Balkans-era suspicions and frictions, not new nor were they even secret problems by any stretch of the imagination, imbued the system with distrust. With the French in charge, the Americans were less and less likely to coordinate their nocturnal activities with ISAF than they did when the Canadians were commanding ISAF. Indeed, an entity was caught directing signals intelligence collections systems at the Canadian ASIC inside Camp Julien because an entity thought Canada was operating independently or with the British and Americans and not coordinating with KMNB. The 'Balkanization' of the KMNB effort thus progressed over Operation ATHENA Roto 2's tenure.[16]

Canada had a number of undeclared assets in Kabul at the time, including a CANSOF detachment, some signals intercept capabilities, a field security team and certain counter-IED capabilities. There was a Mobile Electronic Warfare Team detached to the recce squadron group, but it remained a Canadian asset. These were closely protected assets and it was unrealistic that they, or the raw information they produced, would just be handed over to another nation or multinational headquarters for indiscriminate use. Indeed, no other nation would do the same in any event. Col Ellis believed that "Our intelligence was better than theirs was and I would go on occasion to see General Py, Commander ISAF and I could see his frustration, but I can't give them the ASIC because of that security piece with the Americans, the Americans wouldn't link to them. At the end of the day, I would tell them things because it would impact their force protection and ours. We made sure that in fact the intelligence we had was focusing on the threat, got to them somehow and we never had an incident."[17]

The structure of the Canadian contribution to ISAF in 2004-2005 underscored the limitations of a multinational approach to operations in such a complex environment. For whatever reasons, the new KMNB was not as effective or as efficient as its predecessors and there was a subsequent drop in Canadian confidence in it.[18]

Photo Credit: DND KA2004-A020D

Terrorism conducted by the 'usual suspects' remained the primary threat to Canadian ISAF troops throughout 2004. Working with police, intelligence units, and special operations forces, ISAF regularly disrupted attacks that would have generated mass casualty events.

At a higher level, ISAF HQ and its activities were now beyond the purview of the Canadian contingent. There were six mid-level Canadian staff officers in that headquarters, none of whom held senior positions. Canada had no influence on the direction of ISAF activity within the country, let alone Kabul, in these venues. The recce squadron group and Camp Julien were not enough of a "hand" to join the game. As discussed later, the high-level development initiatives critical for stabilizing Afghanistan nurtured by Generals Leslie and Hillier in 2003-2004 were virtually all shut down, diluted, or altered beyond recognition by the new commanders.

Indeed, the shared opinion of Canadian and other observers from CFC-A was that ISAF HQ was "unworkable, dysfunctional, and a mockery of military standards." The situation was of such concern that one Canadian officer baldly stated that "Animosity between key commanders of the staff is hidden beneath the surface and the veneer of camaraderie is only too easily scratched to reveal weaknesses that could even endanger lives."[19]

Ongoing Strategy Issues

The onset of Eurocorps as the ISAF lead severed much of the strategic continuity that was starting to develop between ISAF, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, and the UN. The personality-based coordination between the Canadian ISAF HQ and CFC-A essentially collapsed for several reasons: Eurocorps was simply not interested and there were suspicions between the French-led force and the Americans. There was "a lot of animosity between the ISAF group that took over from General Hillier's group and [Eurocorps]…. Canada was seen as quite a key player during those days in Kabul and then when the Europeans took over it was a bit more fragmented…."[20] Of course, the anti-American zeitgeist that existed in the wake of the Iraq war played a significant role in these events. Eurocorps jettisoned the prototype national development strategy, something painstakingly crafted by ISAF Canadians (and based on World Bank planning) while it was in the process of being assimilated by their American counterparts in Bagram and in Washington. This set the international community effort in Afghanistan back a year and half.[21]

Fortunately Lt Gen David Barno at CFC-A was already working on a campaign plan which had as its focus Voter Registration and Election operations for the 2004 presidential elections. The CFC-A plan was deficient in the development arena (and that was where Hillier's ISAF HQ was trying to mate its work and CFC-A's work) but not in the voter registration, election and security areas. CFC-A planners correctly identified Voter Registration and Election operations as the main effort and linked the elections to legitimacy. From there, CFC-A developed several lines of operations.[22]

A number of important aspects regarding the implementation of the CFC-A campaign plan had long-term effects, especially in the south in later years. First, and most important, the CFC-A campaign plan recognized that NATO ISAF would expand in Afghanistan and that expansion would probably follow in succession through the four regional commands already established by CFC-A. The issue was NATO resourcing. CFC-A was preparing to support NATO expansion if or when it occurred.

Second, CFC-A altered how Operation ENDURING FREEDOM forces conducted operations, shifting from a "raid" strategy relying on the bases at Kandahar, Bagram and Khost, to deploying task forces and PRTs to the regional commands. The main areas of limited insurgent activity were eastern Oruzgan, Kandahar, upper Helmand, and four provinces in Regional Command (East) bordering Pakistan – Paktia, Paktika and Khost, plus Nangarhar. For the most part, these were remote areas, away from the population centres and the enemy was focusing on 'soft' targets: development and reconstruction agencies for the most part plus local governance. Working with UNAMA, CFC-A wanted to create Regional Development Zones (RDZs) that would focus the following energies in each zone:

- good governance;
- judiciary;
- expansion of the Afghan National Army;
- expansion of the police regional training centers;
- aid and reconstruction; and
- combat forces.

In the RDZ approach, the PRT and the task force in each province would work together with other agencies in the 'security sector reform' pillars to stabilize each region. Combat forces, special operations and conventional, would go after the insurgents in the remote areas to keep them away from the RDZs.[23] The pilot RDZ was scheduled to be set up in Kandahar province sometime in late 2004 or 2005, though they were also resource-dependent and there was still some question about how the projected RDZs related to NATO expansion.

Notably, CFC-A planning behaved as though the power brokers and their militias were of declining influence, even though DDR was still ongoing. This clearly reflected the cumulative positive results of ISAF operations in Kabul in 2003 and of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM operations in Herat and Mazar-e Sharif in 2004. In effect, the CFC-A campaign plan was the only game in town in 2004-2005 when it came to countrywide strategy, and while the presidential elections and provincial elections security planning ramped up after the presidential inauguration in December 2004.

From Embedded Training Team to the Afghan National Training Centre

When the ETT story last left off, authorities in Ottawa would not approve Operation DIANA, the Mazar-e Sharif deployment. This led to a re-examination of ETT operations. The DCDS staff recognized that:

> Less tangible but even more important are the long-term relationships [the ETT] developed with the ANA leadership and the recognition by Afghan society that we have left a solution in place after we go. This will be particularly important as Canada continues with PRT programs and follow-on development programs.[24]

The issue of having Canadian ETT personnel drawn from an ISAF mission working with Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, a separate coalition, was resolved. Operation ARCHER, distinct from Operation ATHENA, was stood up as a separate mission to encompass the ETT and all Canadian staff officers working in American-led coalition headquarters like CFC-A. Consequently, the 14-man ETT in Camp Julien became part of Operation ARCHER, even though TF Kabul still commanded them and they drew support from Canadians in Operation ATHENA. They were still restricted, however, to the Kabul area of operations and not permitted to deploy to Shindand or Herat.

The Canadian ETT continued to provide its professional services to 1st Brigade of the Afghan National Army and especially 4th Kandak, the combat support kandak. The ETTs also significantly contributed to the mentoring of the Afghan National Army Regional Command elements destined for Kandahar, Herat, Mazar-e Sharif, and Gardez. These formed the basis of the four Afghan National Army corps commands that paralleled the NATO and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM regional commands. Those relationships paid off in the future when Canada committed to Regional Command (South) and the Afghan National Army deployed 205 Corps to that region.[25]

The strong links established with the Afghan National Army produced Operation RAVEN. Afghan information, vetted by ASIC information and other sources, located a HiG terrorist leader and the cell that was involved in the Murphy killing. They were based out of the village of Tanji Sidan, about five kilometres from Camp Julien. TF Kabul provided the targeting package to KMNB, who ignored it. Elements in the Afghan National Army were then given the package and within hours, they prepared the operation. Attempts by TF Kabul to use the recce squadron group to surveil the target area and get the ASIC to do the site exploitation were initially rebuffed by authorities in Ottawa during the targeting process. As a result, 23rd Kandak conducted the operation with Canadian embedded trainers as "observers." Operation RAVEN became a full kandak cordon and search operation, which then swooped down on Tanji Sidan in the early hours of the morning, bagging two HiG commanders, one of whom turned out to be number four in the Kabul area and who had literally had to change his pants after seeing the ETTs with Canadian flags on their shoulders. Exploitation resulted in the further takedowns of weapon caches and the overall disruption of HiG activity during the Presidential Inauguration in December 2004.[26]

Ultimately, however, the unwillingness of authorities in Ottawa to permit Canadian ETT deployments led to further changes. ETTs were increasingly required to deploy as the Afghan National Army spread out in Afghanistan to replace the militias and if Canada's contribution could not deploy, it could not really be called an ETT. TF Phoenix was in the process of establishing a more formalized organization, the Afghan National Training Centre,

and it required staffing. By the end of Operation ATHENA Roto 2, the Canadian ETT was converted to a training detachment of the Afghan National Training Centre with the agreement of NDHQ and the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan.[27]

Photo Credit: Author

By 2004-2005, the Canadian Embedded Training Team was re-roled as the Canadian contribution to the Afghan National Training Centre, a facility responsible for building up the Afghan National Army.

Photo Credit: Author

Any government must maintain a monopoly on coercive force. Removal of Afghan militia forces weapons coupled with the increase in the Afghan National Army's capabilities eventually undermined the ability of power brokers to openly coerce the political process.

2004 Election Security Operations

On 9 October 2004, 8.5 of the 10 million Afghan voters registered in the voter registration process and went to the polls to participate in the first democratic elections held in the country in over 30 years. The Taliban and other anti-government entities had been invited to participate back in April, but no Taliban party emerged to argue its case for a return to Islamist despotism. Once the elections were announced, the Taliban and its allies had used every weapon in their arsenals in an attempt to destabilize the country and discredit the elections. Elections personnel had been assassinated. Others were kidnapped or otherwise intimidated. Security forces were strained with suicide IED attacks. Yet millions of people, including a high proportion of women, turned out to exercise their new democratic franchise despite these pressures. And, in response to claims that there was widespread elections fraud, an independent Canadian/Swedish/British team plus 230 international observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Fair Elections Foundation of Afghanistan all concluded that, as elections went, it was fairly conducted. Not perfect, but fairly conducted.[28]

The significance of the elections in the course of events was that it not only gave the new Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan legitimacy in the eyes of the population, it seriously marginalized the power brokers and also created the conditions so that the large international organizations could examine how exactly to deploy development aid and reconstruction monies to the stricken land. That was not possible prior to the elections in any meaningful, large-scale fashion. The elections also heightened expectations that help was finally on the way. LCol George Petrolekas, a Canadian liaison officer with NATO, noted however that "The political ramifications of this success are far-reaching and bode well for the future as long as we in the International Community don't squander our gains."[29]

Maj Deitra Korando, a senior American intelligence analyst at CFC-A, believed "that the Taliban suffered a huge defeat. They were never able to generate enough of anything to derail the process itself…on actual election day, their attempts were every feeble: a couple of rocket attacks, a couple of attempts to enter Kabul. But really, ISAF, the International Security Assistance Force in conjunction with the Kabul police, had locked down the city pretty tight, so the attempts made were largely ineffective and were caught well outside the city."[30]

Photo Credit: Author

With the fog-shrouded central hills to the northeast as a backdrop and the Darulaman Palace complex and Camp Julien in the centre, an observer in the hills can see the vital vote counting facility protected by the Afghan National Army training base in the foreground.

Canada's forces played a significant part in this effort. The following actions all set the conditions for the 2004 elections:

1. the protection of the Constitutional Loya Jirga and interference with power broker agendas in Kabul to gain recognition for a transitional administration 'under one tent';

2. the removal of heavy weapons as a coercive factor in Kabul;

3. the dilution of the militias through the DDR process and the reduction of their coercive capability;

4. the protection and projection of the voter registration process in the face of terrorism; and

5. the removal of key terrorist leaders and cells long before they could act.

Roto 2's contribution was also part of this trajectory, particularly in September and October 2004. NATO established, after some strenuous debate, an Election Support Force designed to temporarily augment ISAF security operations during the elections period. How and why NATO could deploy the 9 000 personnel Election Support Force and not find 500 personnel for Kabul Afghanistan International Airport is an intriguing question.

Photo Credit: Author, from a map courtesy of Maj Brian Hynes

The Canadian Embedded Training Team led by Maj Brian Hynes with 23rd Kandak learned that an Afghan officer had been part of Hezb-e Islami in 1992-1993 and knew where all the previous rocket launching sites southwest of the city were located. These were aggressively patrolled during the 2004 election.

But for the record, the Election Support Force deployed a Spanish infantry battalion to Mazar-e Sharif, an Italian battalion to Kabul, an American mechanized infantry company to Kabul, six Dutch F-16s for close air support, and airborne warning and control system aircraft on standby as the Taliban had no air force. It remains unclear what the aircraft were there for other than to demonstrate solidarity and/or boost numbers.[31]

Camp Julien supported TF Apache, the American mechanized infantry company equipped with M-113s and Hummers, which handled a QRF role in Kabul. The JEMB/UNAMA ballot Central Region Counting House was established in the Afghan training camp adjacent to Camp Julien. The Canadian ETTs worked with 23rd Kandak to establish tight security of that crucial facility where nearly 50% of the votes in the country were counted by elections staff. This involved close mentoring at the headquarters and planning levels – and it all was not one way. Notably, one of the 23rd Kandak officers had been an antagonist during the 1992-1993 troubles and knew where all of the former rocket launch locations were in the hills west of the camp. He passed this information on by sketching it on a map and providing it to Maj Hynes.

23rd Kandak with its Canadian ETTs worked with the recce squadron group's Operation HORSESHOE to deter attacks against both facilities. No rockets were launched from those areas during the elections process.[32] Canada also provided escort and route protection to the ballot convoys (Operation PRONGHORN) and patrolled polling stations within Battalion Group 3's area of operations.[33]

Behind the scenes, Maj Travers and the ASIC, and Maj Macaulay and Recce Squadron were part of a series of operations that completely dislocated Taliban, HiG, and Al Qaeda terrorist cells throughout the city. The first was Operation DRUMHELLER, mounted in mid-September 2004. Credible intelligence reporting suggested that over 800 kilograms of explosives was inbound from Pakistan. The recce squadron group deployed to maintain observation on Routes Indigo and Red to look for the vehicle in question but it was tracked. Ultimately, other parties intercepted the end-users.[34]

The most dramatic was Operation FOX. British sources developed information with the ASIC on four separate terrorist cells in Kabul. Recce's Coyotes were positioned to maintain observation on safe houses and on the principles as they rehearsed their attacks. On the night of 29 September 2004, the United Kingdom patrol company and the Kabul City Police raided four locations, arresting all four cells totaling 20 personnel. This was a major breakthrough; the ASIC conducted sensitive site exploitation and uncovered linkages between all four cells and a number of terrorist entities in Europe, plus evidence of transit and assistance provided by support cells located in the UAE, Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.[35]

Romanian sources indicated that a truck full of explosives was inbound from Wardak province on 2 October. The Norwegian battle group established vehicle checkpoints with the Kabul City Police and found the truck: 11 Field Squadron deployed its EOD/IEDD robots and teams to support the effort.[36] Operation RACCOON, another United Kingdom Patrol Company/Kabul City Police raid supported by Canadian Recce Squadron and ASIC exploitation, netted a whole HiG cell with firearms and explosives.[37]

The Canadian Field Security Team even got one in on 5 October when a source they developed revealed that a terrorist group was rigging a large propane tank to be used by an Al Qaeda cell as an IED against the UNAMA Central Region Counting House. The device was under construction at a facility five kilometres from Camp Julien, but was outside Canadian 'jurisdiction'. The Hungarian company from Battle Group 3 was then tasked to work with the Kabul City Police for the takedown. Unfortunately, there were language difficulties and the raid went into the wrong compound. Working rapidly, the ASIC staff was able to contact the NDS's counterterrorism specialists and re-vector a team onto the right location. 11 Field's experts were brought in to "safe" the device.[38]

In the space of a week, ISAF, with Canadian support, was able to tear the guts out of terrorist activity in Kabul. All of this significantly and even dramatically contributed to

the success of the 2004 elections, despite manpower limitations, national caveats, coalition command and control failures, and personality conflicts. Arguably, this was Roto 2's ultimate contribution to the stabilization effort in Afghanistan.

Toward the end of October 2004, however, armed men kidnapped three JEMB officials. It was unclear if this was insurgent activity or if it was criminal or power broker-oriented. If it was insurgent-related and designed to intimidate the JEMB, they were too late. Unfortunately, it added to an increased siege mentality on the part of the international aid organizations, with subsequent detrimental effects. The three captives were released a month later leading some in TF Kabul to conclude that the event may have been driven by monetary considerations and not ideological ones.[39]

The 2004 elections marked a new era for Afghans. Independent investigations into voter fraud concluded that "election irregularities did not materially affect the outcome." On 3 November 2004, Hamid Karzai was declared president of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for a five-year term with 55% of the vote. Yunis Qanuni came in second, with 16%, followed by Mohaqqeq with 11.7%. Dostum got 10% of the vote.

Of the major power brokers, Abdul Rahim Wardak replaced Fahim as Minister of Defence. Abdullah Abdullah was retained as Foreign Minister, but Ismael Khan and Dostum were appointed Minister of Water and Energy and as military chief of staff to Karzai respectively. As the DDR programme shifted to the more problematic DIAG programme, power broker AMF formations were slowly reduced in and around Kabul to shadows of themselves.[40]

Abdul Rasul Sayyaf progressively lost influence over time. A KMNB surge operation into Paghman district forced Sayyaf to unmask several weapons caches, which prompted General Wardak from the Ministry of Defence to intervene and ask KMNB to cease operations. As a result, Wardak convinced Sayyaf to adopt a more conciliatory tone when it came to ISAF and the international community. Canadian CIMIC noted that there was "increasing discontent in Sayyaf's neighbourhood over Sayyaf. Paghman residents are now asking what can be done about him. There is increased trust in the Afghan Transitional Administration and ISAF."[41]

Hamid Karzai was inaugurated in December 2004. The road was opening up for the Afghans and their international partners to formulate a national development strategy, access the requisite monetary resources, and start repairing the country – if the momentum could be maintained. Canadian ambassador Chris Alexander was concerned that continuity in Kabul was compromised, that ISAF under the Eurocorps was "inert" in comparison with the Canadian-led iterations. The Turkish Corps was on the horizon, however, and things might revert to a more active approach.[42]

There were also growing problems in the south. Canadian analysis concluded that:

> The extremist insurgency has sustained elevated levels of violence throughout the spring and summer months in the south and east including Kabul province…the intention of the enemy is to conduct attacks to disrupt elections process via indiscriminate attacks. The levels of violence witnessed throughout the summer are likely sustainable and likely to continue…[43]

Humanitarian Taskings

With the successful completion of the Presidential Inauguration security operations in December 2004, the Canadian contingent maintained watch on the security 'bubble' around Camp Julien. The recce squadron group was called out on two occasions for non-traditional tasks. The first was a heavy snowfall in the Sarobi district, particularly in the passes. Fuel truck traffic ceased, with potentially negative effects on operations in Kabul. Coyote patrols assessed the situation and KMNB mobilized the Multinational Engineer Group to assist the Afghans with snow and ice control in the passes. On 4 February 2005, a Kam Air 737 flying from Herat to Kabul disappeared off the scopes. ISAF and CFC-A reconnaissance resources were re-tasked to look for the crash site. As U.S. Navy P-3s swept back and forth south of the city, TF Kabul readied two ad hoc Search and Rescue teams from the Health Support Services unit, the recce squadron group and the Slovenian reconnaissance unit. The wreck was found two days later southeast of Kabul and the Slovenes were inserted by helicopter to secure the site (the site was outside the ISAF area of operations, so Canadian units could not respond). The crash killed all 104 passengers and crew, which, as it turned out, was not a terrorist incident and attributed to poor weather conditions.[44]

Operation ATHENA Roto 3: February-May 2005

Led by Col Walter Semianiw, Operation ATHENA Roto 3 became a 'placeholder' rotation while the Canadian government and the Canadian Forces determined the future course of action in Afghanistan. In that respect, Roto 3 basically conducted force protection for itself but was prepared to contribute to the same operational endeavours with KMNB that its predecessor organization had. Structurally, Roto 3 resembled Roto 2 though there was great high-level debate over whether the three infantry platoons should have a company headquarters or not.

TF Kabul HQ essentially applied new code words to old operations and carried on as before with counter-rocket deterrence tasks, route observation, and Camp Julien protection. Roto 3 staff reorganized and consolidated community outreach programmes into Operation ARREST (police training assistance), Operation AMNESTY (engineer and unexploded explosive ordnance removal), Operation ASCLEPIUS (medical outreach) and

Operation AMULET (CIMIC operations). These operations focused on PD 6 and PD 7 to influence the population in the immediate proximity to the facility. Unlike previous rotations, this rotation did not participate in any singular large event.

The All Source Intelligence Centre continued to support KMNB operations and continued to develop information exchanges with CFC-A which significantly assisted with planning for future operations in southern Afghanistan. On one occasion, a field security team gave chase to a suspected vehicle-borne IED disguised as a UN operations vehicle. Camp Julien was alerted to the threat but the vehicle disappeared in the city's maw before it could be stopped. The engineer squadron was put on alert on another occasion when floods were predicted following the spring melt. The main hotspot during Roto 3's tenure was Sarobi district, in which Recce Squadron supported the German battle group as it swept in for a series of cordon and searches with the police. An indication that things were heating up in Kabul came in March 2005 when a Canadian embassy vehicle was targeted unsuccessfully by an IED. The transition from the ETT to the Afghan National Training Centre (CA) detachment was also finalized during this rotation.[45] In May 2005, Operation ATHENA Roto 3 started the transition to TF Afghanistan.

ENDNOTES

1. "Commander's Presentation: Task Force Kabul, Rotation 2 August 2004-February 2005."
2. Interview with Colonel Jim Ellis and LCol Ross Nairne (Edmonton, 8 February 2010).
3. Ibid.
4. In the Cold War days, this was called 'Assault Troop' and was made up of armoured soldiers but assault troop had been removed from the order of battle to save money in the 1990s.
5. "Operation ATHENA Task Force Kabul National Command Element Change of Command Board of Inquiry between Col W.J. Ellis and Col W. Semianiw, 8 February 2005."
6. "Task Force Kabul Commander's Mid-Tour Report" (22 November 2004).
7. "Operation ATHENA Roto 2 End Tour Report: 9 August 2004-10 February 2005."
8. "Task Force Kabul Commander's Mid-Tour Report" (22 November 2004).
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. "Operation ATHENA Task Force Kabul National Command Element Change of Command Board of Inquiry between Col W.J. Ellis and Col W. Semianiw, 8 February 2005."
12. NCE SITREPs (4 September 2004) (17 September 2004); "Operation ATHENA Task Force Kabul National Command Element Change of Command Board of Inquiry between Col W.J. Ellis and Col W. Semianiw, 8 February 2005."
13. NCE SITREPs (18 October 2004) (19 October 2004); "Operation ATHENA Task Force Kabul National Command Element Change of Command Board of Inquiry between Col W.J. Ellis and Col W. Semianiw, 8 February 2005"; Author's observations on the ground in Kabul (December 2004).

14. As described in Maloney, *Confronting the Chaos*.
15. Ellis and Nairne interview.
16. Author's observations on the ground in Kabul (December 2004).
17. Ellis and Nairne interview.
18. Ibid.
19. The various reports by LCol George Petrolekas, the Canadian liaison officer at Brunssum, are quite blunt in this regard. See "Report of the Canadian LO to JFC Brunssum" (3 September 2004 and 11 October 2004). Petrolekas was, unfortunately, marginalized by unadventurous elements in Ottawa who resented his ability to provide them with information they did not want to hear.
20. Ellis and Nairne interview.
21. Hope telephone interview (1 December 2010).
22. CFC-A briefing to the author (Kabul, December 2004). See also David Barno, "Fighting the 'Other War' Counterinsurgency Strategy in Afghanistan, 2003-2005," *Military Review* (September-October 2007), pp. 32-44.
23. Task Force Victory briefing to the author (Kabul, December 2004). See also message Olexiuk to NDHQ (22 January 2004).
24. Cairnes to DCDS, "Operation ARCHER-Staff Positions and Embedded Training Team with Combined Forces Command Afghanistan HQ" (5 October 2004).
25. "Task Force Kabul Commander's Mid-Tour Report" (22 November 2004).
26. See Maloney, *Confronting the Chaos*. See also email thread J3 International and NCE, "Op RAVEN" (28 December 2004).
27. "Operation ATHENA Task Force Kabul National Command Element Change of Command Board of Inquiry between Col W.J. Ellis and Col W. Semianiw, 8 February 2005."
28. BBC News, "Observers Approve Afghan Election" (10 October 2004). Golnaz Esfandiari, "Afghanistan: Karzai Calls On Taliban to Participate in Elections," (RFE/RL 27 April 2004).
29. "Report of the Canadian LO to JFC Brunssum" (11 October 2004).
30. Combat Studies Institute Operational Leadership Experiences interview series, Maj Deitra Korando (Leavenworth, KS, 5 October 2005).
31. Briefing to author, "Support to Presidential Elections" (Kabul December 2004); Daniele Roggio, "NATO's Role in the Stabilization Process of Afghanistan," in *The Future of Euro-Atlantic Security* (Rome, 1-3 December 2004).
32. The map is in the author's possession. See Maloney, *Confronting the Chaos* and NCE SITREP (18 October 2004).
33. "Operation ATHENA Task Force Kabul National Command Element Change of Command Board of Inquiry between Col W.J. Ellis and Col W. Semianiw, 8 February 2005."
34. Ibid.
35. NCE SITREP (9 October 2004); "Operation ATHENA Task Force Kabul National Command Element Change of Command Board of Inquiry between Col W.J. Ellis and Col W. Semianiw, 8 February 2005." See also Maloney, *Confronting the Chaos.*
36. NCE SITREP (3 October 2004).

37. "Operation ATHENA Task Force Kabul National Command Element Change of Command Board of Inquiry between Col W.J. Ellis and Col W. Semianiw, 8 February 2005."

38. See Maloney, *Confronting the Chaos* and NCE SITREP (5 October 2004).

39. "Operation ATHENA Roto 2 End Tour Report: 9 August 2004-10 February 2005"; Ellis/Nairne interview.

40. CRS Report for Congress, Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Presidential and Parliamentary Elections" (8 April 2005).

41. NCE SITREPs (17 January 2005) (31 January 2005).

42. NCE SITREP (17 January 2005).

43. Deployment Order Op ATHENA Roto 3 Tac Recce (7 October 2004).

44. Bashir Seiqy, "Rescuers Scour Afghan Plane Crash," *Turkish Weekly* (7 February 2005); NCE SITREP (3 February 2005) (4 February 2005).

45. NCE SITREPS (March-May 2005).

OPERATION ARGUS:

THE STRATEGIC ADVISORY TEAM-AFGHANISTAN, 2004-2006

The most critical item that emerged from Canada's tenure with NATO ISAF in Kabul in 2003 and 2004 was the recognition that there was a complete lack of a NATO strategy or even a unified approach for dealing with Afghanistan. Yes, there was the Bonn Agreement of 2001, yes, an Afghan document called "Rebuilding Our Nation" was released in 2002 and yes, a number of European nations agreed to work on certain development 'pillars.' However, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM was pursuing a variety of kinetic and non-kinetic initiatives, including security force capacity building, which could loosely be termed strategic in nature. In addition, a variety of national and international aid organizations wandered around the country in an uncoordinated fashion working on projects on a target of opportunity basis.

For the most part, these were operational and even tactical-level responses to the problems of Afghanistan. Nothing tied these efforts together and little of it had anything to do with the Afghan Transitional Administration. There was no federal government bureaucracy; it was a casualty of the Taliban's medieval approach to governance. NATO expansion was generally seen as a means to generate a singular international military command for the country and get local governors to link to Kabul, but that was not the long-term solution to the problems of Afghanistan, even though it was pursued with some vigour and was important in generating some unity of effort. Having a command did not necessarily mean, however, that there was a strategy to go along with it. For some, the command and control arrangements even became ends unto themselves.

This problem replicated itself in the Canadian context. Canada had established strategic objectives in November 2001 and re-confirmed them by the 2003 commitment process and the 2004 planning process to accept a PRT. However, there was still no coordinated Canadian strategic approach – it was as fragmented as the situation in Afghanistan was. Even though it had a small number of fine people in Afghanistan, institutionally CIDA did not really want to be involved with National Defence or the Canadian Forces or even with Afghanistan. Its focus tended to be Africa. No one in Canada seriously considered a policing component yet. Foreign Affairs had its factional splits over Canadian involvement in the country. The cooperative approach taken by MGen Andrew Leslie and ambassador Chris Alexander was an early and successful attempt at integration on the national front, which produced strategic and operational effects in Afghanistan through their ability to leverage allied money and Afghan behaviour.

This approach was personality-based, however, and as such had no 'legs' unless it was institutionalized somehow – and that was thwarted by a variety of interests, some of them in NATO. In 2004, LGen Hillier and his staff identified these factors as they led to Canada's key role in mentoring and developing a strategy for Afghanistan. Ultimately, it also formed a more coordinated Canadian approach to the war in Afghanistan.

The Problems with Developing a Strategy for Afghanistan

On arrival in Kabul, Canadian planners who had experience with the NATO-led Stabilization Force in Bosnia wondered where ISAF's multi-year road map (MYRM or 'merm') was. The MYRM, developed to solve the problem of agency coordination and resource allocation in Bosnia, was a synchronization matrix that separated stabilization and reconstruction activities into categories, established benchmarks to measure progress, put them all on a timeline and then assigned resources from the various international agencies. In effect, the MYRM was the strategy for Bosnian reconstruction; the Office of the High Representative (OHR) was the focal point of all international activity and even though the Stabilization Force created the MYRM, the OHR administered it.[1] NATO ISAF in Kabul had no MYRM. There was no real OHR equivalent either.

The Afghan Transitional Administration was a rough equivalent to the OHR, but with the 2004 federal elections upcoming, it was focused on becoming a legitimate, democratically elected government. That said, preliminary efforts to establish reconstruction programmes had taken place in 2003 and 2004.

First, there were the Europeans with their stovepiped plans for assisting the transitional administration. Italy was supposed to help with the judiciary, while the Germans had lead for police development. Britain held the counter-narcotics portfolio. The Americans had lead status for army development but it was administered through CFC-A's TF Phoenix. There was little or no formal coordination between any of these activities.

At the same time, the re-created Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, under the tireless leadership of Dr. Ashraf Ghani, worked with the World Bank and a variety of donors to establish 12 National Priority Programs for the Afghan Transitional Administration. These programmes, which ranged from microfinance schemes to water and sanitation improvements, were an ambitious and comprehensive plan to repair Afghanistan after 25 years of war. Of these, the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) was the best known and, ultimately, it would become important to Canada's war in the south.

The NSP was designed to develop local governance and alleviate poverty at the community and district levels. One of the concepts the rural development ministry wanted to employ as part of the NSP was called the Community Development Council.[2] The idea was that the Community Development Council would work with another organization,

the Provincial Development Committee, and both in turn would interact with the governors to administer the NSP. This was all very embryonic and the UNAMA even opposed in part because they did not come up with the idea and could not exert any control over it. UNAMA wanted to establish regional offices at the provincial level to do essentially the same thing using UN resources and contract personnel, while Ghani and others wanted an Afghan-controlled system run by Afghans working for an Afghan government.[3]

The problem in 2004 was the ability and capacity of the Afghans to implement these ideas. There was a fledgling bureaucracy in Kabul, but none in any of the provinces. Connections to the provinces were only starting to be facilitated through the American-led PRTs in 2004, but in many cases the local governors had direct links to Karzai – and they used them. How the National Priority Programs and the NSP would coexist alongside the counterinsurgency effort and then fit into any country strategy or operational concept was unclear in 2004, but it would have to be sorted out. How well the planned Provincial Development Committees and Community Development Councils would interact with the governors, who had their own independent military forces, was even less certain.

At the same time, the new American Operation ENDURING FREEDOM command Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A) developed its own approach to the development and counterinsurgency problems in late late 2003 and early 2004. CFC-A's objectives were to enable:[4]

1. the establishment of security and the rule of law;

2. good governance and democracy;

3. socio-economic development and reconstruction; and

4. engage at an international, regional and inter-agency level to achieve security goals and prepare Afghanistan for its continued role in the Global War on Terror.

CFC-A identified the centre of gravity as the Afghan people. Instead of the Bonn Agreement's pillars, CFC-A had its own:

1. defeat terrorism and deny sanctuary;

2. enable Afghan security structures;

3. sustain area ownership;

4. enable reconstruction and good governance; and

5. engage regional states.

The primary thrust of the CFC-A's thinking was to extend the reach of the Kabul government throughout the country in part to prepare for the 2004 national elections. This would give the Afghans a means to participate in the elections, and thus generate legitimacy. It would also strengthen the links between Kabul and the provinces. In turn, this would facilitate the delivery of security and reconstruction programmes, and especially the DDR and heavy weapons cantonment programmes, which up to this point had been limited to the Kabul area. In theory, the means to do all of this would primarily fall on the PRTs, which would evolve beyond their original configuration to handle more development and DDR capacity.[5]

Out of this emerged the Regional Development Zone idea. CFC-A planners envisioned an RDZ surrounding each PRT. Until the Afghan government could establish itself better in the provinces, the PRT would coordinate and work alongside the provincial governor, development agencies and non-governmental organizations to establish good governance, a judiciary system, an expansion of the police and army, and the fostering of aid delivery, reconstruction, economic growth and revenue generation in selected areas. Combat forces, special operations and conventional, would operate to secure the RDZs and stamp out any insurgent activity. Areas outside the RDZ would be dealt with once the provincial government was established and secure. Kandahar province was supposed to be the pilot RDZ sometime in 2005, with others to follow later.[6]

Canadian planners were confronted, then, with several separate, overlapping, and even competing ideas about how the international community and the Afghan government were approaching the problems of reconstructing the country. There were the 'Bonn Pillars'; there was a NATO Operation Plan, which was limited to Kabul operations but trying to evolve into something more; there were the Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development's reconstruction programmes; and there was the CFC-A strategy and the conceptual operational applications of it.

Conversations between President Karzai, Eileen Olexiuk and Chris Alexander from DFAIT, and LGen Rick Hillier produced an Afghan request for a number of Canadian planners to help Ashraf Ghani (now Minister of Finance) develop a coordination plan for national development. One of the main issues was the need to meet World Bank requirements so that Afghanistan could access World Bank financial resources for reconstruction. That meant that a plan had to be in place and it had to be transparent and workable. If there were no plan, there would be no certification and therefore no reconstruction money. It was literally that simple.[7]

LCol Ian Hope, LCol Kevin Moore and Maj Howard Coombs, who were in ISAF HQ in the CJ-9 (CIMIC-joint) shop, were sent to work with Ghani's staff by June 2004. Throughout 2004, the Canadian planners conducted a centre of gravity analysis of the situation. Success in Afghanistan was confronted with substantial obstructions on all fronts: social, political, military and economic. These obstacles interfered with the creation of a legitimate and credible government.[8]

While the Afghan Transitional Administration was preparing for the 2004 elections, there were several competing powers outside Kabul. These were mostly centred on the main power brokers discussed in earlier chapters: Dostum, Fahim, Sayyaf, Rabbani, Khalili and Ismael Khan in the north and west. In the east, Pacha Khan Zadran was the primary power broker. In the south, the Sherzai family and the Kandahar Justice Assembly dominated Kandahar province, while an unknown collection of irregular forces were in charge in Helmand.[9]

The analysts believed that there were, in fact, five identifiable and separate economic systems in Afghanistan. Dostum was involved in gas, textiles and agriculture. Fahim handled emeralds, Lapis Lazuli gemstones, and timber. Sayyaf and the Sherzai clan were into money and household items. Ismael Khan cornered the market in textiles and agriculture. All five were involved in the opium and weapons trades.[10]

The question the planners asked was this: was Afghanistan's future model similar to Colombia or Somalia, on one hand, or Thailand, Ghana, Peru or El Salvador on the other? To shift the balance, the focus of any future national plan had to compete with, and undermine, the illicit economies. The proposed methodology worked out in the fall and winter of 2004 suggested a scope of operations that focused on the district level:

> Select districts to receive intensive development packages using the combined effects of the [National Priority Programs], [Afghanistan Stabilisation Program], NSP, [National Emergency Employment Programme], [Microfinance Investment Support Facility for Afghanistan], PRT, and RDZ as part of a National District "Clean up" Certification Programme. The criteria for selection and certification will be cooperation in security efforts, law and order, poppy cultivation and economic potential.[11]

The next move was to link these district economies to the urban economy via a reconstructed national transportation road network, followed by establishing "national control over all major border crossing sites and begin to secure revenue from tariffs."[12] This all presumed that the Afghan National Army and police grew proportionally and that DDR and weapons cantonment programmes continued outside Kabul to undermine power broker militias (it is also important to note here that the insurgency that later confronted Afghanistan did not yet exist as a serious challenge to development).

The main products that emerged from the Canadian planning process were the Investment Management Framework and the Operational Road Map. Essentially, the Framework and the road map were like the MYRM from Bosnia but heavily modified to conform to Afghan circumstances. They established categories, benchmarks, and effectiveness criteria for security, governance and development; they were comprehensive and it was the only option that anyone could or would generate to get a grip on coordinating the myriad of agencies operating in Afghanistan and couple them to a common way forward.[13] (See Figures 7-1 and 7-2)

When LGen Hillier went to present the Investment Management Framework and Operational Road Map to the NATO Joint Forces Command HQ in Brunssum, however, he ran into a brick wall. General Gerhard Back, a Cold War Luftwaffe fighter pilot, did not want ISAF to have anything to do with development in Afghanistan and told Hillier in a nasty exchange during a teleconference that ISAF was there for security only and to stay inside his box. This limited view coming from a German general was stunning, given Germany's role with taking the pilot NATO PRT in Konduz. Try as he might, Hillier could not get NATO to accept any form of responsibility for coordination, or even assistance. There were suspicions in the Canadian camp that elements in NATO were trying to distance themselves from Afghanistan and that the Brunssum headquarters was being used as a mechanism to do so. Even SACEUR, General James Jones, could not get General Back to cooperate. When Eurocorps took over command of ISAF from Hillier in late summer 2004, the Investment Management Framework and Operational Road Map were allowed to die. French Lt Gen Jean Louis Py[14] did not really want anything to do with the project either.[15]

That approach was problematic. NATO was expanding, or planning to expand, throughout Afghanistan, with PRTs but it had no strategy to integrate them or any other NATO activity with Afghan national development or with CFC-A's security operations. By choice. Combined with the lack of serious movement on the policing and judiciary fronts by the Germans and Italians between 2002 and 2005, the decision by a German general and a French general to scuttle the creation of a national strategy for Afghanistan should rank as one of the most serious setbacks inflicted on the international effort to stabilize Afghanistan. It certainly demonstrated the limits of Canadian influence in NATO circles and clearly drove LGen Hillier, who was about to become the CDS, to work much more closely with the Americans and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM instead of the European-dominated NATO ISAF.

Indeed, the Investment Management Framework and Operational Road Map were briefed to Pentagon planners in December 2004. Conceptually, they were absorbed into American thinking on Afghanistan but as the Americans were planning to reduce their forces in favour of an expanded ISAF, it did not take root in those venues.[16]

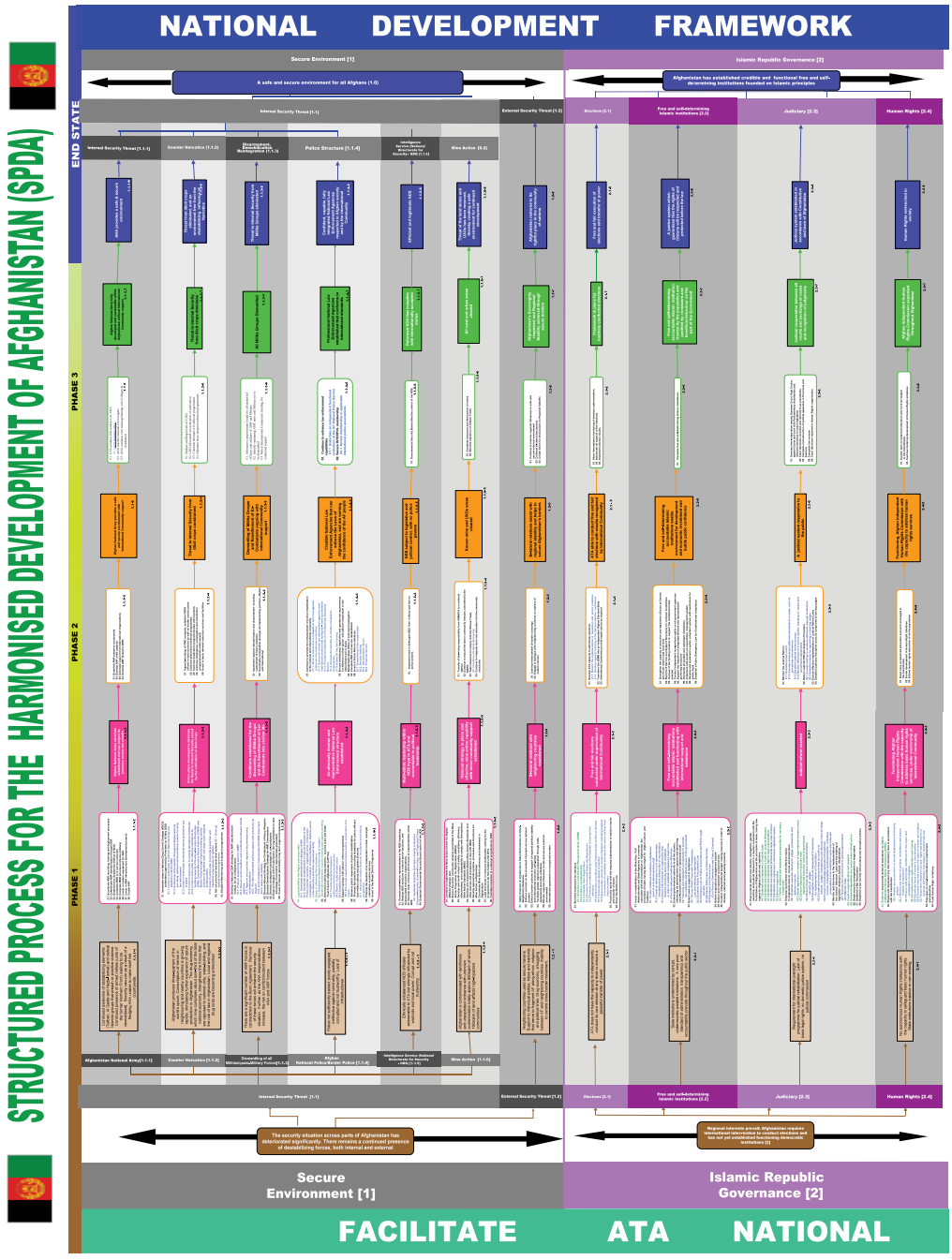


Figure 7-1: The Investment Management Framework

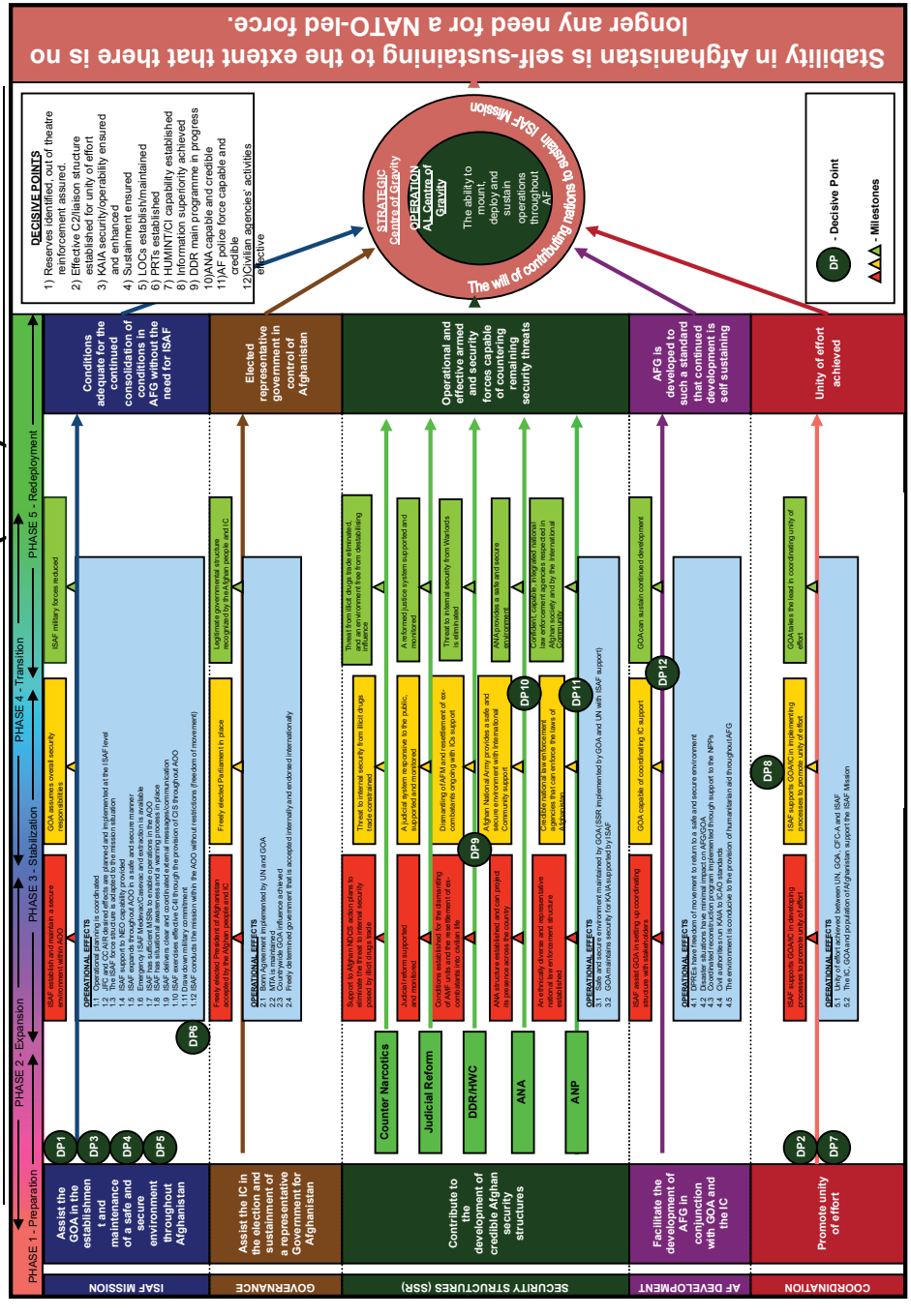


Figure 7-2: The Operational Road Map

Enter the Afghans. Ashraf Ghani approached Hillier in the spring of 2005 and asked if Canada would send a planning staff on a more permanent basis to help again. As it turned out, NATO remained uninterested and CFC-A planners retained an operational-level focus. Ghani liked the Investment Management Framework approach and thought it was the right direction to go, but his staff needed mentoring in developing it further. At the same time, the idea that the international community should commit in writing to the reconstruction of Afghanistan, in order to avoid a repeat of the post-Soviet era, also emerged. A group of ambassadors, with Chris Alexander among them representing Canada, thought there should be a document that linked both Afghan efforts and an international commitment. In time, this document would be called the Afghanistan Compact. Consequently, Ghani needed help with a new framework and with the Compact.[17]

After consultation with ambassador Chris Alexander and Nipa Bannerjee, the CIDA head of development at the embassy, Hillier took the idea of a Canadian advisory team back to Ottawa where it encountered opposition from the middle-level management of Foreign Affairs who, in the words of one observer, "were wrestling with the rational, arguing with the rational" and claimed they hadn't been informed. When confronted with message traffic saying they had been, they remained reticent because "[SAT-A] wasn't invented there." Hillier held an interdepartmental meeting with Foreign Affairs, CIDA, the RCMP and DND. These principles came away from the meeting in an enthusiastic frame of mind and CIDA offered a contract development worker or 'co-operant' to the team. Elements in Foreign Affairs remained difficult; it took Peter Harder, the deputy minister, to force the middle-level opponents to back down. These people viewed the Strategic Advisory Team Afghanistan (SAT-A) with some alarm because they did not come up with the idea and they could not control it.[18] Parenthetically, this became the basis for the future destruction of SAT-A by internal Canadian bureaucratic forces.

Col Mike Capstick and a group of hand-picked planners arrived in Kabul in the summer of 2005 to form Strategic Advisory Team-Afghanistan. This was dubbed Operation ARGUS.

It is important to note here, before delving into SAT-A activities, that by this time Hillier and the people surrounding him were becoming more and more attuned to the problems of interagency coordination and strategy not only in an alliance sense but also in a Canadian sense. Strategically, the rehabilitation of Afghanistan, in order to prevent it from becoming an Al Qaeda safe haven again, meant that rural development and security for that effort had to be integrated and coordinated. Canada could play a lead role in facilitating that coordination but to do so, Canada had to lead by example and demonstrate to the Afghans that Canada was willing to put its money and people where its mouth was. A handful of advisors were not salient enough.

At the same time, having SAT-A assist with creating the 'funnel' for the reconstruction monies in Kabul wouldn't allow Canada to monitor what was coming out of the 'spout' at the other end in the provinces. Taking a PRT would permit Canada a window into the practical application of the development strategy and, in theory, a feedback loop could develop whereby inputs from the PRT could be fed to SAT-A and the plan adjusted by the Afghans. However, none of this was explicitly stated at the time. Canada already agreed to a PRT before SAT-A came along, but having the two in place had potential synergy. This could, again in theory, be leveraged by Canada in various halls of power in Kabul, Brussels, New York and Washington. Whether anyone, DFAIT or any other Canadian entity involved in foreign policy, saw the value in this at the time remains open to question. Certainly, there were visionaries in the Canadian Forces and the Department of National Defence that did.

The idea of having a Canadian battle group and special operations forces re-committed to Afghanistan paralleled all of this. The Canadian Army's operational pause was going to end in January 2006, which made a battle group available for operations, somewhere. Since Canada was going into Kandahar, and Kandahar was dicey from a security standpoint, having a battle group and special operations forces on hand to shield any PRT development efforts was a prudent idea given the state of affairs as they unfolded throughout 2005. The idea of a battle group in addition to a PRT commitment emerged by March 2005.[19]

Having SAT-A, ISAF and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM HQ staff, military trainers and the embassy in Kabul, and then having a PRT, a battle group, and special operations forces in Kandahar, was a potent vertically integrated force. It would allow Canada access to all aspects of Afghanistan security, reconstruction and development, which would improve Canada's ability to understand the situation in Afghanistan and adjust to it so Canadian national objectives could be met in denying Afghanistan to Al Qaeda and its allies. Again, the whole package could be leveraged with the Americans and NATO. Nothing like this had been attempted before in Canadian military history and certainly Canadian Army leaders never had this high level of influence during any previous conflict in its history.

Operation ARGUS: Strategic Advisory Team Afghanistan

Ensconced in SAT House behind the Canadian embassy complex in Kabul, the 17-man and woman SAT-A under Col Mike Capstick went to work in August 2005. Functionally, there were two planning teams, A and B; a policy analyst, a CIDA advisor, a strategic communications specialist and support staff, plus interpreters. The SAT-A planners lived in SAT House but worked in civilian clothes alongside their Afghan counterparts in the ministries around Kabul. SAT-A had its own armoured sport utility vehicles and, as its members were mostly military personnel, SAT-A handled its own point-to-point security.

It is important to note that SAT-A was a bilateral operation between Canada and Afghanistan. It did not belong to ISAF, nor did it belong to Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. It was a purely self-contained Canadian initiative designed to address a particularly significant gap in the international community's involvement in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Credibility with the Afghans was paramount. There was to be no national monetary agenda in the way that CIDA operated elsewhere in the Third World, that is, SAT-A was not to engage in preferentially directing Afghan reconstruction aid monies through Canadian development entities, corporations and contractors; other nations were doing that, and the Afghans knew it and resented it. SAT-A would not indulge in that behaviour, though there was pressure from some quarters to do so.[20]

Photo Credit: Author

Col Mike Capstick initially led the Strategic Advisory Team Afghanistan. This relatively small but capable group worked closely with the Afghan government in the formulation of the Afghan National Development Strategy, a document that was a vital stage in gaining international reconstruction monies for Afghanistan.

In 2005-2006, SAT-A was involved in five main activities. The main effort was the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS), in this case, the interim version of it, the I-ANDS. One team worked with Dr. Ishaq Nadiri, the Senior Economic Advisor to the President. Nadiri developed strong relationships with the head of aid at the Canadian embassy, Nipa Bannerjee, who at the time was trying to get CIDA in Ottawa to understand the coordination problem that existed in Kabul. CIDA, however, was constrained by the culture of its long-term programming processes and was incapable of reacting in a timely fashion to Bannerjee's concerns. She only had one other person in Kabul, Christina Green

from CIDA. Nadiri asked Bannerjee to head the External Advisory Group (EAG), which consisted of all eleven potential donors that would feed the ANDS with monies once it was established. Bannerjee and Green were overwhelmed; this wasn't a CIDA task, but there was nobody else to do it and consequently, Bannerjee asked SAT-A to assist with basic capacity building with the EAG staff – how to run a meeting, prepare slides, put out an agenda. That involvement expanded when Nadiri asked Capstick to help the Afghan staff understand synchronization and other planning tools, tools that would be directly applied to the I-ANDS as it evolved in various draft forms throughout late 2005 in the run-up to the planned 2006 London Conference.[21]

The most important work undertaken by SAT-A was the ANDS in both its interim and final versions, and the Afghanistan Compact. The ANDS would evolve from the interim version once all the kinks were worked out. On arrival in August 2005, SAT-A supported the ANDS Working Group as a priority task. Given that the planned $10 billion dollars would not be made available for Afghanistan reconstruction without a plan and without a serious commitment by the principle players, the imperative to get the plan right the first time was paramount.

The politics surrounding the role of the EAG in the I-ANDS process are beyond detailed recounting here. For the first time since the Bonn Agreement of 2001, there was some form of cohesion within the donor community. In effect, one of the main problems revolved around the personalities from the UN, who wanted control of everything and behaved "arrogantly" with a "first among equals" attitude. The UN was not generally trusted by Afghans for historical reasons dating back to the early 1990s. The EAG in one sense served as a sort of buffer to keep the UN included but not in control while at the same time giving other donors a means to voice their concerns: "get the donors in line before too much ink is spilled."[22] Keep in mind that if there was no plan, the donors would not invest in Afghanistan reconstruction. If there were no investment monies, then nothing would get done on a programme level in the provinces and the communities.[23]

Another area SAT-A worked in was the National Programme Support Office. The rural rehabilitation ministry's twelve programmes as established in 2004 were in trouble. The National Programme Support Office was a CIDA/USAID initiative to assist with quality control, troubleshooting, and coordination for the National Priority Program's 12 initiatives. The intent was "to take 15, 20, 25 or whatever number of the most screwed up development projects in the country and give them some support."[24] When the Canadian planners arrived and assessed what was going on, they discovered that only 23% of the reconstruction monies allocated to these programmes could be spent because of the lack of programme management skills within the various programmes' staff. After preliminary work at establishing an outline plan and requirements between the SAT-A team and the staff, a contractor was brought in to expand those skills sets.[25]

That got SAT-A more interested in capacity-building for the whole Afghan government. Could SAT-A have a role to play in helping the Civil Service Commission develop its capacity to produce bureaucrats? A SAT-A team moved in there to assess and assist as much as it could. There was, it turned out, no coherent strategy to establish and create a civil service. This was astounding. Here it was, four years into the Afghan reconstruction process, and nobody in the international community had focused on the basics of setting up a government. Once again, SAT-A conducted a recce to see how big the problem was and get a working group established to address it; this evolved into what became over time the problematic Public Administration Reform Strategy that bedeviled everybody for years as the Afghans tried to steer a course between dependence on international contractors and capacity building. As it turned out, the main problems included the fact that "there's nothing that resembles a human resource management system, there are big gobs of civil servants whose ideas are rooted in the Communist era with a central planning micro-managerial way of doing business…. the more rubber stamps you have, the better off you are." And these people were elderly – the Taliban had no bureaucracy, so the next generation of Afghan bureaucrats were coming from the expatriate community and then there were personality conflicts between those who stayed and those who left. It was, according to Col Mike Capstick "a nightmare."[26]

SAT-A worked closely with the Afghan government on another area: strategic communications. Mentoring processes and creating programmes was one thing, explaining them to the extremely diverse international community organizations both in Kabul and outside the country was a serious challenge. In effect, the Afghans had to learn the new language of the 21st century media and how it worked for and against the Afghan government's agendas. Indeed, one of the most important successes was the creation of a strategic communications advisory group, which brought representatives from UNAMA, ISAF, CFC-A, and selected embassy spokesmen together to assist with those problems. SAT-A worked behind the scenes to get this to happen and left no fingerprints. There were other examples like this that were quietly facilitated over beers next to the fire pit at the SAT House. As it was not an embassy, a lot of informal facilitation could take place that could not have safely taken place in other venues or with visible representatives of national governments.[27]

SAT-A plunged in anyway and worked tirelessly in what was a high-threat environment. Kabul was not safe and secure. It was, at that time in 2005-2006, as dangerous as Kandahar was. There were daily threat warnings on IED and suicide IED activity. There were random rocket attacks. Bombs went off regularly. Government offices, of course, were prime targets as were nearly all international military personnel. In 2006, there was severe rioting when an American patrol accidentally shot some citizens; then there were the "Danish cartoon" riots of equal severity. This was building a national government while under fire.

No other Canadian government organization was in a better position to assist the Afghan government than SAT-A; certainly, no other country outside the United States had developed that level of credibility within the Karzai government at this time in 2005-2006. This credibility was based on the personal relations of the 17 people who shared the dangers and worked day in, day out, alongside their Afghan counterparts in those key government ministries involved in the planning process.

One of the imperatives was that the Bonn Agreement of 2001 was set to expire with the provincial elections of 2005. Bonn needed to be replaced. The Afghanistan Compact was the commitment and the I-ANDS was the plan. The ANDS would evolve from the interim version once all the kinks were worked out. On arrival in August 2005, SAT-A supported the ANDS Working Group as a priority task. Ambassador Chris Alexander was already in the lead in the development of the Compact, which would replace the Bonn framework commitment document. There were other players, like Barney Rubin from the United States, who played a role in the drafting process. SAT-A helped Ambassador Alexander "scribe" the drafts of the Compact and the I-ANDS and coordinated them with other drafts. At the same time, SAT-A worked with Nipa Bannerjee supporting her in the External Advisory Group.[28]

Photo Credit: Author

The Strategic Advisory Team house was adjacent to the Canadian embassy in Kabul. The fire pit and beer fridge reputedly contributed to generating more Canadian influence in Kabul than formal diplomatic methodology.

The Afghanistan Compact established several principles of cooperation:[29]

1. Respect the pluralistic culture, values and history of Afghanistan, based on Islam;

2. Work on the basis of partnership between the Afghan Government, with its sovereign responsibilities, and the international community, with a central and impartial coordinating role for the UN;

3. Engage further the deep-seated traditions of participation and aspiration to ownership of the Afghan people;

4. Pursue fiscal, institutional and environmental sustainability;

5. Build lasting Afghan capacity and effective state and civil society institutions, with particular emphasis on building up human capacities of men and women alike;

6. Ensure balanced and fair allocation of domestic and international resources in order to offer all parts of the country tangible prospects of well-being;

7. Recognize in all policies and programmes that men and women have equal rights and responsibilities;

8. Promote regional cooperation; and

9. Combat corruption and ensure public transparency and accountability.

All parties were committed to establishing security:

> Genuine security remains a fundamental prerequisite for achieving stability and development in Afghanistan. Security cannot be provided by military means alone. It requires good governance, justice and the rule of law, reinforced by reconstruction and development. With the support of the international community, the Afghan Government will consolidate peace by disbanding all illegal armed groups. The Afghan Government and the international community will create a secure environment by strengthening Afghan institutions to meet the security needs of the country in a fiscally sustainable manner.

> To that end, the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and partner nations involved in security sector reform will continue to provide strong support to the Afghan Government in establishing and sustaining security and stability in Afghanistan, subject to participating states' national approval procedures. They will continue to strengthen and develop the capacity of the national security forces to ensure that they become fully functional. All OEF counter-terrorism operations will be conducted in close coordination with the Afghan Government and ISAF. ISAF will continue to expand its presence throughout Afghanistan, including through Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), and will continue to promote stability and support security sector reforms in its areas of operation.

Governance was to be a priority:

> Democratic governance and the protection of human rights constitute the cornerstone of sustainable political progress in Afghanistan. The Afghan Government will rapidly expand its capacity to provide basic services to the population throughout the country. It will recruit competent and credible professionals to public service on the basis of merit; establish a more effective, accountable and transparent administration at all levels of Government; and implement measurable improvements in fighting corruption, upholding justice and the rule of law and promoting respect for the human rights of all Afghans.
>
> The Afghan Government will give priority to the coordinated establishment in each province of functional institutions – including civil administration, police, prisons and judiciary. These institutions will have appropriate legal frameworks and appointment procedures; trained staff; and adequate remuneration, infrastructure and auditing capacity. The Government will establish a fiscally and institutionally sustainable administration for future elections under the supervision of the Afghanistan Independent Electoral Commission.

Economic and Social development would be based on six sectors:

- Infrastructure and natural resources;
- Education;
- Health;

- Agriculture and rural development;
- Social protection; and
- Economic governance and private sector development.

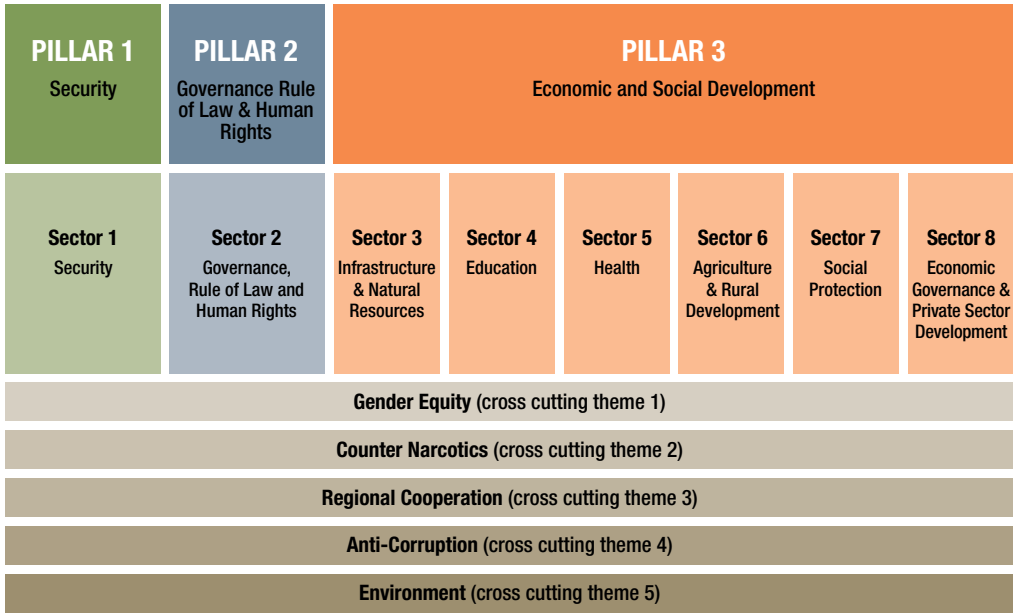
Counter-narcotics received special mention:

> Meeting the threat that the narcotics industry poses to national, regional and international security as well as the development and governance of the country and the well-being of Afghans will be a priority for the Government and the international community. The aim will be to achieve a sustained and significant reduction in the production and trafficking of narcotics with a view to complete elimination.

The heart of the I-ANDS looked identical to the MYRM from Bosnia. It had a synchronization matrix that depicted the "pillars": Security, Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights; and Economic and Social Development. Each pillar had a "sector" or "sectors"; in the case of the I-ANDS, security was a sector and a pillar, but pillar 3 had sectors 3 to 8, or infrastructure to social protection. Each sector had several programmes. The planners had also developed five "cross cutting themes": gender equity, counter-narcotics, regional cooperation, anti-corruption and environment. These themes were to be part of any plan developed by the sectors/pillars. The themes, as depicted, supported the pillars in the diagram.[30] (See Figure 7-3)

All Afghan government programmes had to fit within this framework, so the I-ANDS acted as a prioritization tool. The I-ANDS was geared toward five-year goals. Since it was a living document, there were expansion joints for 10- and 15-year benchmarks. Examining the whole I-ANDS is problematic here but the security 'pillar' is a good example of how the plan broke out. There were National Defence, Internal Security and Law Enforcement, DIAG, and de-mining programmes. All had a five-year or earlier benchmark: by Jaddi 1389 (the end of 2010) the Afghan National Army was to have 70 000 personnel trained, equipped and capable of meeting the security needs of the country. It was to be ethnically balanced. All illegally armed groups were to be disbanded by Jaddi 1386 (2007). As for de-mining, 70% of all stockpiled mines were to be destroyed by the same period. Each programme had to have a plan to meet the goal – and each programme had to be assigned to a ministry.[31]

The principle players in London accepted the Afghanistan Compact and the I-ANDS in February 2006, which served as the conceptual basis for development and security activities, and in turn formed the background for the development activities that the Canadian Army would be involved with in Kandahar province over the next five years.



Source: Afghanistan National Development Strategy: An Interim Strategy for Security, Governance, Economic Growth & Poverty Reduction

Figure 7-3: The Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy

The question that must be answered some day is: why, with all of its experience in Bosnia and Kosovo, NATO jettisoned responsibility and, for nearly two critical years from late 2003 and well into 2005, actively refused to assist in the creation of a strategic plan for Afghanistan after the requirement had been identified by Canadian general officers, diplomats and development personnel – not passively but actively, while NATO was pushing for expansion of its mandate and the deployment of more and PRTs?

And where were the Americans? The State Department was aware of SAT-A elements and expressed envy at SAT-A's position and even conveyed this to SAT-A personnel, but did not attempt to supplant or undermine its activities. In this case, Canadian and American objectives were similar and SAT-A was having positive effects, so why interfere with it? It was unfathomable to some SAT-A personnel that Canada was able to be so adroit, exert so much influence, and fill so many voids during this critical time. At the same time, the access and successes that SAT-A enjoyed in 2005-2006 generated significant internal Canadian bureaucratic jealousies which would in time lead to its premature demise. That said, the 'funnel' was in the process of getting into place for reconstruction monies. But what about the provincial-level 'spout,' the PRTs?

ENDNOTES

1. SFOR and OHR briefings to the author (Bosnia, June-July 2001, and August 2004).
2. Briefing to the author, "National Solidarity Programme-An Overview" (Kabul, December 2004). See also "National Solidarity Programme Disburses First Grants to 14 Afghan Communities," *Voices*, Vol. 1 No. 2 (December 2003); Sultan Barakat, "Mid-term Evaluation Report of the National Solidarity Programme (NSP), Afghanistan, May 2006," MRRD-NSP, Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unity (University of York, May 2006).
3. Interview with Nipa Bannerjee and Andy Tamas (Kabul, December 2005).
4. CFC-A briefing to the author (Kabul, December 2004).
5. Ibid.
6. TF Victory briefing (December 2004).
7. Interview with Col Mike Capstick (Kabul, 29 December 2005).
8. Maj Kathy Amponin and LCol Ian Hope, "Strategic Assessment for the Reconstruction of Afghanistan." (October 2004) (December 2004). Note: This briefing deck was based on the initial work conducted by the three Canadian officers earlier in 2004.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Briefing to the author, "The Investment Management Framework and the JFC Operational Road Map" (Kabul, December 2004), and contemporaneous discussions with the Canadian participants in the process.
14. On 7 August 2004: General Jean-Louis Py, commander of Eurocorps took command of ISAF.
15. Telephone interview with LCol Ian Hope (17 February 10). See also Maloney, *Confronting the Chaos,* pp. 114-117.
16. Ibid.
17. Interview with Col Mike Capstick (Kabul, 29 December 2005).
18. Interview with Col Mike Capstick (Kabul, 29 December 2005); Hillier, *A Soldier First,* p. 424.
19. Telephone interview with LCol Ian Hope (17 February 10).
20. Author's observations (Kabul, December 2005), and discussions with SAT-A personnel.
21. Capstick interview; Interviews with LCol Christian Drouin and Major James Mackay (Kabul December 2005); Bannerjee and Tamas interview.
22. Capstick interview.
23. Interviews with LCol Christian Drouin and Major James Mackay (Kabul December 2005).
24. Capstick interview.
25. Capstick, Drouin, and Mackay interviews.
26. Capstick interview.

27. Discussions with the author (Kabul, July 2006).
28. Discussions with SAT-A personnel (Kabul, July 2006).
29. Drawn from the Afghanistan Compact document.
30. As described in Maloney, *Confronting the Chaos*, pp. 114-122.
31. Ibid.

THE ROAD BACK TO KANDAHAR:

THE CANADIAN ARMY RE-COMMITS TO OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM, 2003-2005

The Overall Situation in 2003-2004

The departure of the Canadian Army from Kandahar in November 2002 reduced situational awareness in that area and there was no apparent requirement to consider the possibility that Canadian troops would be re-introduced there. From 2002 to 2003, however, residual insurgent activity directed at the interim administration and its coalition supporters remained. For example, reports came in that Afghan tribes in the south would be paid to fight for the Taliban by elements in Pakistan, with the first 'Pakistani' Taliban cells identified by analysts in July 2002.[1] Sometime in October 2002, Mullah Omar instructed madrassas in Pakistan who were loyal to him to recruit small groups of young men to be sent into each Afghanistan province to lay the groundwork for the anti-government effort.[2] The following month, a U.S. Army intelligence team working with local militia forces thwarted an assassination plot against Hamid Karzai in Kandahar City.[3]

The remnants of Al Qaeda's conventional forces and survivors of the training camp network were reorganized inside Pakistan. They were directed to attack government and coalition facilities in Paktia, Paktika, and Khost. Al Qaeda cells continued to destabilize the tribal situation in Khost.[4] Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's reconstituted HiG organization, operating from bases in Pakistan, mounted urban terrorist operations in Kabul.[5]

It should also be noted that on the international front, Al Qaeda unsuccessfully attempted to lash out in response to operations in Afghanistan. An Al Qaeda plan to commit mass murder against the families of American special operations forces was uncovered. And, closer to home, an Al Qaeda plot to attack and sink HMCS *Montréal* was thwarted.[6]

It was increasingly clear in coalition circles throughout 2003 that these were not all discrete, disconnected activities. At some point in September 2003, there were reports that Mullah Omar established a committee to combat the interim and transitional administrations. Dubbed the Quetta Shura, the organization consisted of four committees: military, political, cultural and economic.[7] Al Qaeda was represented in the new organization but there remained some friction between the shura's personalities over the role of Mullah Omar, who was seen by some to have "lost" Afghanistan.[8] That said, a mass distribution of audio cassettes was noted with Omar calling for attacks against the government and the international community efforts in southern Afghanistan.[9]

Canada and ISAF Expansion: The Early Days of 2003

Three months after Operation ATHENA launched in 2003, planning commenced on committing Canada to an Operation ENDURING FREEDOM PRT. At that time, Canada was looking to remain committed to Afghanistan after it had relinquished command of ISAF in 2004 and involvement in a PRT was seen as part of an exit strategy from Kabul – before any Canadian forces even landed in Kabul. Once the Kabul mission was up and running, however, the urgent push for NATO expansion in Afghanistan in the fall of 2003 was felt by the senior Canadians on the ground, particularly MGen Andrew Leslie, DComd ISAF. As he put it, "Amongst UNAMA and certain diplomatic leaders it is becoming fairly clear that they believe the ATA under President Karzai may not survive, politically or physically, unless ISAF expands across the entirety of Afghanistan."[10]

With Karzai in the lead, and with the support of UNAMA, elements in the non-governmental organizations community and even local power brokers, there were more and more requests on all fronts to expand the ISAF area of operations or to combine ISAF and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM under NATO leadership. At the same time, American representatives asked Canada to commit to a PRT. MGen Leslie was cautious as Canada was fully committed to Kabul:

> We are doing more than enough already in terms of our national commitment, and the PRTs are open-ended endeavours…..once the aid starts arriving this may attract warlords/bandits eager to share in the wealth and cause an outcry for more security. Within a short time one could have an infantry company or battle group permanently deployed in Afghanistan, far away from Kabul.[11]

A PRT commitment, however, was a useful way to handle what could be an abrupt shift after Canada relinquished command of ISAF. If no one came to take the job after Canada, ISAF might collapse. Committing to a PRT would ensure that Canada was covered, that Canada was not abandoning Afghanistan. There were concerns that "Pulling out of ISAF without adequate replacements could lead to a collapse of the ATA and the entire country would be back at square one."[12]

The problem was that no one wanted to take ISAF as a lead nation after Canada. As a result, altering the commitment to a traditional NATO headquarters instead of a lead-nation headquarters, became a Canadian strategic priority. NATO expansion became a mechanism to involve the whole alliance, not just a handful of countries that had certain capabilities. The expansion issue remained "incoherent" into September 2003, but the idea that a PRT commitment could "give maximum exposure and value for minimal troop contributions" took hold in Canadian circles.[13]

At the same time,

> The pressure from Mr. Brahimi, Mr. Annan, President Karzai, a veritable herd of local ambassadors and the U.S. (who has a vested interest in getting ISAF to take over the PRT constructs and to help with the entirety of the country, not just Kabul) as well as about every IO, NGO and UN organization, is now approaching a tilt point. To expand ISAF to include responsibility for the management of the PRTs and to provide [command and control and communications] for Kabul is too nice a fit for the many special interest groups to pass up. NATO is keen to show it is relevant, SACEUR (a U.S. officer) is keen to take the pressure off of the hard-pressed CENTCOM forces, and some nations have said they will not take the PRTs under CJTF 180 command (France and Germany, apparently). The killing role of CJTF 180 is not a nice fit with the PRTs and causes the internationals a lot of angst in terms of not willing to be associated with them (though they are very grateful for the security umbrella they provide).[14]

NATO-led ISAF was going to expand, period. What was Canada going to do next to stay in the game? That left the PRT option. However, there was now a problem, as DComd ISAF reported home: "the safest ones are getting snapped up quite quickly, and within a couple of months only the wild and woolly places will be left from which to choose." The Americans were probing Canada about taking the Jalalabad PRT and it was a real possibility as it was close to Kabul and the Kabul International Airport logistics air head: "this might cost us a small rifle company…and some civilian police/CIDA/DFAIT/[International Organizations] personnel."[15] When there was no coherent reply from Ottawa to the Canadian principles in Kabul, MGen Leslie urgently suggested some thought be given to the situation:

> I recommend we think through, very quickly, how we want to extricate our forces or at least downsize as of August 2004. If PRTs form part of that strategy then we need to start sending tentative signals to that effect. The NDHQ PRT recce team is a very good idea. Sooner, rather than later. My fear is we might end up with Kandahar or something equally unpleasant.[16]

In September 2003, the Chief of Staff for operations at DCDS was instructed to plan to deploy a "PRT investigation team" to informally discuss matters with United States planners at CJTF-180. At this point, CJTF-180 was the division-level headquarters for conventional Operation ENDURING FREEDOM forces in Afghanistan and was in charge of the PRT file. The DCDS wanted two things: he wanted to know what exactly PRTs were and how they fit into what was happening in Afghanistan; and he informally wanted to ask what Canadian Forces contribution could be made to Operation ENDURING FREEDOM operations.[17]

The planners were, in effect, keeping options open. The Canadian government might want to use a PRT commitment to exit from Kabul; it might want to do both the Kabul mission and a PRT. In any event, anticipatory planning had to be conducted without making firm commitments.

Back in the ISAF arena, PRTs were being snapped up. The French were, apparently, interested in Herat. The New Zealanders wanted Bamiyan, while Germany wanted Konduz. Mazar-e Sharif was the British target, while the United States and Italy were planning to share Gardez. Parwan was for the taking, as was Kandahar and Jalalabad. As MGen Leslie reported to Ottawa, "Our intent is to keep your options open as the national authority. Should we decide to support the PRT route, we do not want to be backed into what might be an unpleasant PRT location such as Kandahar (which the United States is very keen to unload on any unsuspecting friend)."[18] A possible course of action included:

> ….downsizing our Kabul ISAF contingent to a small [NSE] and staff, and one LAV or Iltis/ Mercedes-based infantry company group with one troop of Coyotes and some ISTAR assets… pick up or share one PRT relatively close to Kabul, total about 120. Make sure that CIDA is willing to kick in funds to support local CIMIC projects to the tune of $4 Million Cdn per year…deploy three medium-lift Cormorant helicopters based in Kabul. Primary mission to support the Cdn PRT, secondary mission to support the rest of ISAF.[19]

As Operation ENDURING FREEDOM PRT planning continued, another idea emerged in Kabul. How about Canada taking a PRT in Kabul, plus satellites in Parwan, Logar and Wardak provinces? This was logistically advantageous and salient. It was sent to Ottawa for consideration but there was still no response.[20]

Throughout September and October 2003 there were high-level debates raging over the future of the various American and NATO command structures in Afghanistan, and how they could or should be related. By October 2003, an agreement was reached between the CENTCOM Commander-in-Chief, General John Abizaid, and SACEUR, General James Jones, agreed that ISAF expansion through the medium of the PRT was a good approach. It would contribute to security sector reform outside Kabul but more importantly, it was a "potential medium for the Afghan Transitional Administration to extend its influence outside of Kabul."[21]

The situation in Afghanistan was changing throughout 2003. Operation ENDURING FREEDOM analysis passed to NATO concluded that the Taliban and Al Qaeda were in the process of "launching a concerted campaign" against ISAF, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM,

the Afghan Transitional Administration, and the non-governmental organizations in southern and eastern Afghanistan. Recruitment was up. There were more and more meetings between the Taliban and Al Qaeda leadership. More insurgent support money was detected. Assassination plans against Presidents Karzai in Afghanistan and Musharraf in Pakistan were uncovered. The possibility of a split within the Taliban leadership, including the possible emergence of an even more radical faction was of some concern. Mullah Omar was seen by some analysts to be comparatively moderate.[22]

Kandahar was of particular concern, given its centrality in southern Afghan economic and religious/political life. By the fall of 2003, there had been two simultaneous attacks on government checkpoints, attacks which exhibited evidence of coordination and improved organization. Pro-government mullahs were assassinated in Kandahar in August 2003, while local people complained that there were more and more illegal vehicle checkpoints and inadequate policing. In Zabul province, there was more enemy activity than before but local Afghan forces and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM special forces were keeping the enemy off balance. Most insurgent activity, however, appeared to be in Kandahar province. There were further indications that the HiG organization was increasingly involved and supported by three groups in Pakistan.[23]

This was all in the lead up to a North Atlantic Council meeting where NATO agreed to expand ISAF throughout Afghanistan. The Germans pushed for command of the former Operation ENDURING FREEDOM PRT in Konduz as a pilot programme (in part to get out of Kabul), while limited deployments of ISAF forces were permitted outside the existing area of operations around Kabul. In effect, the North Atlantic Council agreed that the expansion of ISAF "would strengthen the ability of the Afghan Transitional Administration to provide a secure environment" for reconstruction.[24]

In November 2003, the Minister of National Defence asked for options vis-à-vis Canada and ISAF. The CDS explained that, by February 2004, Canada needed a strategy to find nations able to replace the Canadian contingent in Kabul in August 2004. It was now NATO's responsibility, not Canada's, but "NATO has experienced considerable difficulty in finding nations willing to provide resources deemed necessary…." NATO, furthermore, could not force countries to commit, so if Canada had interests worth protecting in Kabul, "we must…assume an active role outside of the force generation process." Canada could not sustain its effort in Kabul past August 2004 but Canada could not unilaterally withdraw.[25]

Photo Credit: Author

Kandahar City is Afghanistan's Second City. It is the crossroads of trade nationally and regionally and is also a vital seat of religious legitimacy in the Pashtun areas of the country.

Photo Credit: Author

The Canadian Government Changes: December 2003

Political changes in Canada affected the course of events: Paul Martin replaced Jean Chretien as Prime Minister in December 2003. This led to an alteration of Canadian foreign and defence policy, a process that became the primary focus of activities in Ottawa. By May 2004, there was renewed interest in sorting out Canadian commitments in Afghanistan. The options as they stood were:[26]

1. maintain the new Kabul commitment of Camp Julien, an ISTAR squadron, and support but reduce Canada's 'profile' in ISAF and Afghan circles;

2. establish a Canadian PRT in 2005;

3. do both commitments in 2005; and

4. get out of Afghanistan altogether by August 2005.

The planners cautioned against option 4 because it would seriously harm Canadian/American/British and Canadian/NATO relations.

Once again, the possibility of committing Canadian forces to Iraq was raised in September 2004. It was reiterated that the Canadian Forces could only offer limited support to any Iraq endeavour because of the Afghanistan commitments. Perhaps some "counter-terrorism" capability (read: special operations forces) or individual augmentees could be provided, but the CDS reminded the Minister of National Defence that Canada already contributed four exchange officers including a major-general, 20 police instructors in Jordan, two RCMP and one Foreign Affairs officer in Baghdad, plus the assistant military advisor to the Special Representative to the Secretary General for Iraq. At $300 million, Canada was also the seventh largest donor of aid in Iraq.[27] Iraq was off the table for the time being.

In October 2004, Canada stood up Operation ARCHER as a separate commitment to Afghanistan. MGen Leslie's original recommendations regarding increased Canadian involvement with Afghan National Army training finally bore fruit but in a more formal fashion. The original training team was constituted from existing manpower from the Canadian contingent. Now it became a separate mission. One of the reasons for establishing ARCHER was that Canada could contribute to better collective training for the Afghan National Army "on tasks that will support ISAF exit strategies." The connections made during training led to long-term relationships with Afghans; this was deemed "particularly important as Canada continues with PRT programmes and follow-on development programmes." That is, Canada could make and leverage more and more personal contacts with a greater variety of Afghans.[28]

Involvement with Afghan National Army training, however, meant dealing with Operation ENDURING FREEDOM as the NATO-led ISAF was not formally involved with Afghan National Army training yet.[29] That meant that Canadian staff had to establish links to the new American command, CFC-A, the main Operation ENDURING FREEDOM headquarters for Afghanistan. In addition to the planned 14-man ETT that would work with TF Phoenix, three officers would deploy to CFC-A HQ and another two to CJTF-76. This gave the Canadian Army an "in" with Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, which in turn would increase Canadian visibility on their activities, specifically PRT development.

On the down side, Operation ARCHER ETTs were not authorized to "participate in directed operations unless approved," a reflection of concern for political sensitivities regarding perceptions of ISAF 'stabilization' versus Operation ENDURING FREEDOM 'combat.'[30]

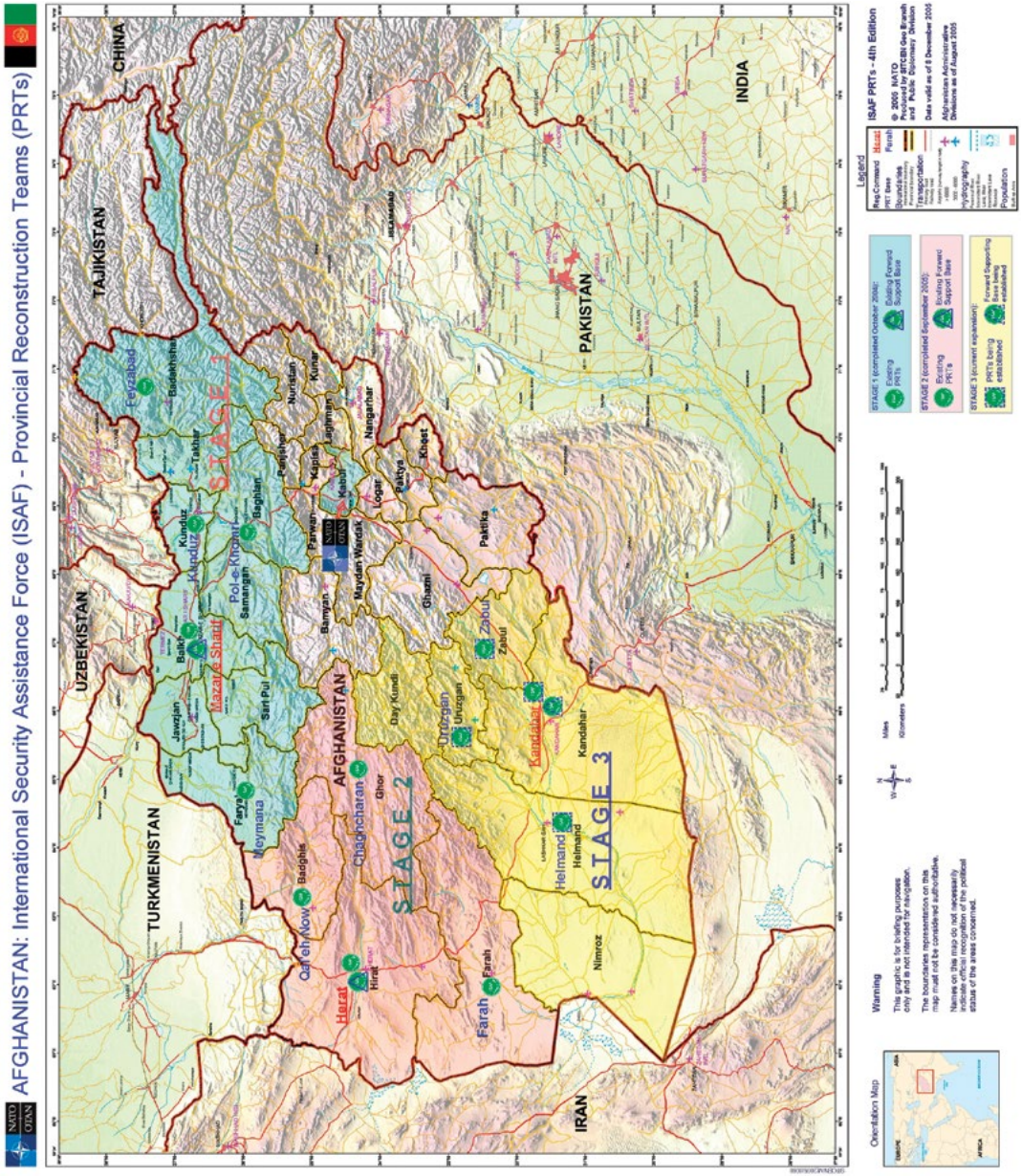
If Canada committed to a PRT under Operation ENDURING FREDOM, it would come under the rubric of Operation ARCHER, not Operation ATHENA. Between May and November 2004, National Defence, Foreign Affairs and CIDA worked to figure out what a Canadian PRT contribution would look like.

In August 2004, the PRT working group explored "post-August 2005 deployment to Afghanistan options." At that time, there were two other geographical regions competing for Canadian Forces attention: the Middle East and Africa. There was a possibility that one of the historically numerous Palestinian-Israeli peace settlements might be signed with the possibility that it might require interpositionary peacekeeping force. No one in the working group was holding their breath. As for Africa, developments there would "remain a peripheral concern" particularly the Sudan where no one so far had asked for a commitment of troops and in any event, there was no peace framework anyway.[31]

That left Afghanistan. The assessment was nothing short of dire; the Working Group concluded that "The threat of government collapse in 24 months is HIGH." ISAF staged expansion (see Figure 8-1) was critical to avoid this but, as the group noted:

> **Stage I:** experienced force generation difficulties;
>
> **Stage II:** expansion shows signs of force generation troubles; and
>
> **Stages III and IV:** force generation will likely begin in mid- to late-2005.

"Afghan political, social, and economic stability remains precarious…. Extending the influence of the Afghan government beyond Kabul is critical. ISAF support to Afghan elections is a function of its PRT footprint."[32]



Source: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Figure 8-1: NATO International Security Assistance Force Stage III Expansion

The options suggested by the working group were:

1a. Canada backfills an existing PRT or establishes a new one;

1b. Canada leads the establishment of a PRT and a forward support base [brigade HQ and battalion-sized quick reaction force];

2. Canada keeps a recce squadron in Kabul;

3. Canada deploys a battalion group in KMNB under the United Kingdom's lead; and

4. Combination of 1 and 2, or 1 and 3.

All options would require "interdepartmental consensus on a concept of operations, role and structure. Foreign Affairs and CIDA have already committed to a PRT." Indeed, Foreign Affairs preferences were Herat, Chaghcharan, Qal'eh-ye Now, Farah and Kandahar.[33]

One month later, a deployment order was issued for the PRT Strategic Reconnaissance Team, which consisted of personnel from the Canadian Forces, CIDA, DFAIT, and the RCMP. The Strategic Reconnaissance Team's task was to "determine the most suitable location for establishing a Canadian PRT."[34]

The Strategic Reconnaissance Team was provided with detailed direction. Canada already committed to a PRT during the NATO Istanbul Summit – now it was time to select a location. Herat and Kandahar had by this point been narrowed down as the main contenders. Herat was now on the table after CDS General Henault was buttonholed by SACEUR during a trip to Afghanistan. The Strategic Reconnaissance Team leader was specifically instructed to confirm with his interdepartmental confreres that there was a "3D understanding of the security environment." In addition, to avoid the problems that existed between the Canadian Forces and CIDA in previous years, CIDA was to "in collaboration with DND, explore CIMIC opportunities which take into account the evolution of and within the PRTs" and that CIDA would look at links to "a Government of Afghanistan National Development Strategy, including the National Priority Programs."[35]

The three departments finally agreed to five criteria prior to the departure of the PRT Strategic Reconnaissance Team. Any Canadian commitment should:

1. support NATO ISAF Stage II expansion;

2. relieve United States forces;

3. optimize Canadian effects in Afghanistan;

4. build the 3D approach on the Canadian development process; and

5. have adequate combat support and sustainability to the endeavour.[36]

By early November, the PRT Strategic Reconnaissance Team reported in. This team deployed for 10 days to Afghanistan in October 2004 to study PRTs and where things stood. One of the main problems the team encountered was the lack of a senior Canadian representative at ISAF HQ and "problems of getting the real data out of ISAF HQ. Supporting briefings were useless." (This was a result of the lack of Canadian saliency in Kabul post-August 2004).

The Strategic Reconnaissance Team determined that Canada could maintain a surveillance squadron in Kabul and a PRT in either Herat or Kandahar. The Kandahar commitment could start as early as August 2005 while the province was under American lead. The British were looking at taking lead headquarters in Kandahar, so, the Strategic Reconnaissance Team noted, there was a possibility that a Canadian task force could deploy in January or February in 2006. As for Herat, Canada could take over the PRT, the forward support base and the brigade headquarters for the planned NATO ISAF Regional Command (West) HQ.[37]

Canada's ambassador to Afghanistan, Chris Alexander, wanted a Canadian presence in Kabul, but pointed out that the emergent National Priority Program that the government was working on would need to use PRTs in the provinces so that reconstruction aid could be delivered and those outlying areas connected to the government in Kabul. He had no preference, he told the Strategic Reconnaissance Team, but he leaned towards Kandahar.[38]

Discussions with CFC-A indicated that CFC-A was "facing a major counterinsurgency operation in Afghanistan." The success of the 2004 elections was an operational defeat for the Taliban and they would react to it. The DComd of CFC-A, a British officer, thought Canada should commit to taking over Regional Command (West). Over at the Office of Military Cooperation Afghanistan, a staff officer noted presciently that focus on counter-narcotics, which would increase in the near future, "could expose the PRT as a soft target for retaliation from the organized crime factions." In his view, a Herat PRT would not be as affected as the one in Kandahar.[39]

When the Strategic Reconnaissance Team visited CJTF-76 (CJTF-180's replacement – the 25th Infantry Division took over in 2004 from the 82nd Airborne), they were encouraged to recommend Herat. However, "it was evident that CJTF-76 has not conducted any planning for the ISAF expansion in Stage II and III." This was a disturbing development on many levels, but the Strategic Reconnaissance Team did not elaborate with details.

The argument for Herat lay on the basis that it was a stable region post-Ismael Khan. An American task force, TF Longhorn, could provide the security a Canadian PRT would need as it went about its business. Notably, special operations forces could play a role: "Herat offers good opportunities for the involvement of CSTO [special operations forces]. Early introduction would help shape the battlefield while strategic reconnaissance and direct action in the more remote areas would support PRT patrols."[40]

The Kandahar PRT, as it stood in 2004, "is part of a counterinsurgency operation commanded by Regional Command (South)." The present PRT "under Task Force BRONCO, limited itself to civil affairs projects and force protection patrols in the vicinity of the PRT….it is considered a manoeuvre unit of TF BRONCO." There were severe restrictions on how it was currently being used, as the Strategic Reconnaissance Team noted:

> The PRT functions as a civil affairs-centric scheme that is felt to be inadequate to meet future ISAF tasks. A different structure and concept of operations would better enable the PRT's ability to increase the influence of the Government of Afghanistan inside the province but this would be a challenge and difficult to implement under the TF BRONCO command.[41]

Furthermore, "a Canadian PRT would be expected to contribute to counterinsurgency operations." As for special operations forces, there was "some possibility of employment but the large presence of coalition special operations forces conducting counterinsurgency is noted."[42]

During the month that followed, National Defence, Foreign Affairs and CIDA debated the merits of the PRT commitment. On 7 December 2004, the three ministers delivered their recommendation to the Prime Minister, Paul Martin. In light of the upcoming NATO foreign minister's meeting and an informal NATO summit planned for early 2005, the three sought approval to establish a Canadian PRT in Afghanistan. The reason for doing so was:

> Canadian policy has taken a leading role for three years now. We joined the United States and its allies in the neutralization of the terrorist threat and to create a solid foundation [for reconstruction] so Afghanistan can never be a safe haven for terrorists. Both of these goals are integral to the security of Canadians and our relationship with our international partners, in particular the United States.[43]

Furthermore, "our diplomatic presence has facilitated significant progress on a number of issues." Afghanistan was a fragile state and authority must be extended to the provinces: "Enhanced international assistance, particularly outside Kabul, will be the key to the success of Afghan-led efforts." Canada had four objectives:[44]

1. ensure Afghanistan becomes a stable, democratic, self-sustaining state with no haven for terrorists;

2. build Canada's profile and influence on peace and security issues and demonstrate that Canada can make a difference;

3. support NATO in its first critical non-European operation; and

4. support the United States in its global campaign against terrorism.

A Canadian PRT "would signal our intentions to our allies, effectively staking a claim to a location for a Canadian PRT that best suits our interests." Its mandate would be to "establish a secure environment and extend government authority."

The most important factor was NATO ISAF expansion Stage III. Canada's options were limited by the Italian/Spanish/Portuguese acceptance of Regional Command (West). Stage I and Stage II were already taken by other countries, while the United Kingdom was looking at taking over Stage III. Stage III would cover southern Afghanistan "where the insurgency is waning." Stage IV, Regional Command (East) was engaged in "intense counterinsurgency operations."[45]

Consequently, Kandahar was the best option that fit Canadian objectives. "Our vision for a PRT, focused on stabilization, could produce results" in that taking the Kandahar PRT could "possibly assist in accelerating the eventual convergence of the ISAF and OEF missions." That is, Canada could act as a bridge between the two and facilitate NATO Stage III expansion. There were risks, however. There was a lack of governance, insurgent attacks and ongoing criticism by some of the blurring between PRT development and counterinsurgency: "the profile, safety, and impact of our PRT could be diminished as a result of the counter-terrorism activities of large numbers of coalition forces in that region." Canada's efforts would focus on building relationships, influencing the behaviour of the leadership in Kandahar province, and improving governance capacity.[46]

There was, generally, a split in DFAIT on taking on an Operation ENDURING FREEDOM PRT. One faction opposed it, and, aping a variant of the French line, did not want Canada to have anything to do with such a PRT because it might play a role in the American-led high-value enemy leadership hunting and counterinsurgency operations. As one observer noted, "some people wanted to just 'do nice' and not do 'not nice'." Finally, on 9 December 2004, Canada publicly announced that it would accept command of a PRT for Kandahar province. Canada was headed back south.

Photo Credit: Author

Photo Credit: Author

Kandahar City is situated on a millennium-old trade route between the Indian sub-continent and ancient Persia. The Taliban were initially formed in 1996 to clear the Chaman-Kandahar highway on behalf of Pakistani economic interests.

Hillier Takes Command: February 2005

By February 2005, General Rick Hillier replaced General Ray Henault as the CDS. The change in command produced significant changes in how the Canadian Forces approached Afghanistan, specifically operations in the south and the PRT. One of these changes was the creation of Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command (CEFCOM). CEFCOM in effect replaced the DCDS functions under a single general who now handled an operational command that was physically removed from NDHQ and the downtown Ottawa bureaucracy and sent to the Star Top complex in the east end of Ottawa. The most important aspect of CEFCOM's establishment was that it buffered military operational planning and the conduct of operations from direct interference by the politically driven components of the military and civilian defence bureaucracy, which, as seen in the Kabul chapters, had significant negative effects on the conduct of operations.

On the international front, the NATO Heads of State meeting in February 2005 revealed that there were continued issues between the French position and the American position on the command structure and the specifics of the relationship between ISAF and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. What role this played in Canada's decision to commit is unclear, but it slowed the momentum for NATO's expansion in Afghanistan. Ultimately, however, the Heads of State agreed to continue with ISAF expansion into the Stage II area of western Afghanistan, with Italy in the lead.[47] NATO Heads of State also vaguely pledged to "enhance cooperation with OEF."

Focus now shifted to the specifics of the Canadian Kandahar commitment. Though it can make for tedious reading (and writing) this process is important historically because decisions made at this time had a dramatic impact during the course of operations the following year. If Canada had not gone with the force structure that came out of this process, it is likely that Kandahar and Helmand provinces would have collapsed in the face of insurgent action in the summer of 2006.

In early March 2005, military representatives of the four countries that were looking at commitments to Regional Command (South) – Canada, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and the United States – met in several sessions to hash out the specifics of Stage III expansion. The British position was that they wanted to take command of Regional Command (South) and Kandahar province. A United Kingdom-led NATO headquarters, the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps, was preparing to take over ISAF HQ in August 2006, right when Stage III expansion was supposed to occur.[48] However, there were domestic political factors that were edging the British military planners towards taking Helmand province with a battle group and a PRT, which forced them to relinquish their designs on Kandahar province. Some of those factors inclined the planners away from taking Regional Command (South) lead.

The Dutch suggested making Regional Command (South) HQ a rotating headquarters between Canada, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. This approach had been previously implemented in Bosnia under SFOR and was considered successful; General Hillier commanded Multinational Division (South-West) in Bosnia in 2001 and was conversant with the idea.

As an aside, those domestic factors in the British case related to the matter of narcotics and the belief that Helmand province was the core of this activity in Afghanistan. The focus of British operations in Afghanistan was counter-narcotics before anything else. British commanders, including Lt Col Stuart Tootal who was bound for Afghanistan with 3rd Battalion Parachute Regiment battle group, was vexed that:

> part of the UK's mission was the stated intent of eradicating the cultivation of opium poppies. Ninety-three percent of the world's opium comes from Afghanistan, with half the crop being grown in Helmand. Most of it enters Western cities in the form of heroin and it feeds the habit of 95 percent of Britain's addicts.[49]

Indeed, Tootal and others pointed out to their leaders that eradication would undermine local support for the Afghan government, in an area they were headed into:

> I raised this issue with the Whitehall officials who briefed us on the mission…. Despite these concerns, the advocates of official policy insisted that reducing the production of opium was an essential part of the mission.[50]

A Canadian analysis provided by LCol Robert Jensen of Operation ACCIUS, expressed concerns similar to Tootal in January 2005:

> So far, the focus has been on the farmers, which is the poorest and most vulnerable link in the chain. The counter-narcotics program is strengthening the drug lords because the higher the person is in the chain the greater percentage of drugs they can store. The eradication program will take away the income of the farmers and dramatically increase the profits of the middle men and the drug lords. The effort must focus higher up the chain but this is difficult because many of the senior drug dealers have direct ties to the senior bureaucrats, military, and politicians.[51]

Additionally, it appeared to Canadians participating in discussions that the United Kingdom was leaning away from Regional Command (East) as much as possible – even geographically. The British political leadership arguably wanted to conduct counter-narcotics and development operations rather than fight the American 'Global War on Terror.'

The reality of the situation was that all of this overlapped, but some form of cognitive dissonance was preventing clarity. As a result, the United Kingdom shifted more and more towards a Helmand focus in the planning process in the spring of 2005.[52]

What did this mean for Canada? This was where the idea that Canada would take lead of Regional Command (South) with a Canadian-based multinational brigade took shape. The Canadian PRT commitment was a catalyst for Stage III expansion in that it was more like an ISAF PRT than an Operation ENDURING FREEDOM PRT but as the details were hammered out, and there was no detailed plan in existence, the flow of events took up both organizations and swept them together. Moreover, there was precedence for this – the NATO PRTs in the north and west were supported by a brigade headquarters and enablers and was styled as a 'Forward Support Base,' which Regional Command (South) headquarters resembled.

By March 2005, these ideas solidified into plans. Canada was taking a PRT in Kandahar; the British were going to go into Helmand with a PRT and a light infantry battalion. The Dutch were seriously looking at Oruzgan. Ultimately, all four nations accepted that "it was in the U.S. interest to ensure a successful transfer to NATO of the appropriate parts of the current operation as part of their plans for the transformation of U.S. forces in Afghanistan and the region and they would thus do all they could to make it happen."[53] A regional brigade-level "surge/strike" capability was necessary to back up the PRT-battalion combinations that the British and the Dutch were looking at. The Regional Command HQ would "have to perform a command function rather than act as a coordinating function between the various provincial national groupings. The one deficiency was in aviation, however, and that needed to be addressed in due course.

The American position, and this is important to note given subsequent events in 2006, was that any arrangement could not interfere with American activities involving the tracking and neutralization of high-value terrorist leadership targets and that there would be "proactive" rules of engagement to allow the forces to take the fight to the enemy. This was not a UN operation; this was not a NATO Balkans operation. That was clear. Finally, the American representatives explained that they did not want to take up the role of regional firefighter to bail out national contingents from circumstances of their own making."[54]

At this time, the issue of what threat level the incoming forces could expect to face emerged. A non-Canadian view was that "The biggest single threat to security stability in the Stage III area comes from criminal elements engaged in drug production and trafficking throughout the region who intend on protecting their lucrative trade."[55] The quadrilateral planning group had already expressed a slightly different view in that there would be "greater military challenges of the Stage III area."[56] According to Canada's new CDS, General Hillier:

> What I did insist on was that a full battle group should be sent to Kandahar along with a [PRT], because two or three hundred Canadian soldiers in the [PRT] could make little impact on their own. If the security situation in Kandahar became dire, as indeed it did soon after our arrival, those soldiers would be stuck in vulnerable positions with no easy way to ensure their security or rescue them from the extreme risk they would face every day.[57]

And this was in line with what the other four Regional Command (South) countries were already contemplating – a PRT with a twinned battalion group in each of the assigned provinces.

A Canadian Air Wing in Afghanistan?

Once again, as it had in Kabul, the shortage of aviation resources came up for discussion. Regional Command (South) was geographically huge. Consequently, rapid response to crisis situations demanded helicopters and close air support. At issue was that the Americans were contemplating relinquishing control of Kandahar Air Field and withdrawing their aviation assets to Bagram as part of Stage III or Stage IV. The British and Dutch were going to bring helicopters and close air support aircraft for their forces: what was Canada going to do? A staff check was made on the possibility of deploying six CF-18s, building on the 2001 planning. Another was conducted to determine helicopter availability.[58]

The saga of the loss of Canadian medium-lift helicopter capability dates from the dark days of the 1990s when political decisions resulted in the selling of the Canadian CH-47 Chinook force to the Netherlands – exactly the same Dutch helicopters that were deployed to Kandahar in 2005. The replacement of Canada's Kiowa armed observation helicopters, its Twin Huey tactical transports and the CH-47s with a single air frame optimized for executive transport left Canada hamstrung in later years, particularly in Afghanistan. Even the Kiowa would have been useful, as functionally equivalent American aircraft like the OH-58D Warrior wound up supporting Canadian ground forces later in 2007-2009 because there was no Canadian capability.

Under Hillier's leadership, the Canadian Forces initiated a medium-lift helicopter acquisition programme in 2005. It would take time, however, to regain this lost capability so a staff check was conducted to see what could be done. The main requirements for aviation in southern Afghanistan in the context of 2005 included troop lift, casualty evacuation, sling load for resupply, command and control, reconnaissance and over-watch. Planners looked at the CH-124 Sea King and the CH-146 Griffon. For some reason the new CH-149 Cormorant helicopter, as suggested by MGen Leslie back in Kabul, was not to be considered. The use of the CH-124 was discouraged as well, according to the staff check, "employment of the Sea King in Afghanistan will further degrade the ability of the air force to fulfill defence tasks in support of the Chief of the Maritime Staff."[59] The message was clear:

the Air Force and Navy were not prepared to relinquish helicopters for Afghanistan, implying that the continental defence task for North America would be compromised.

That left the CH-146 Griffon. As these machines were later deployed to Afghanistan in 2009, the decision not to deploy them in 2006 becomes a serious historical question. One argument that made the rounds in the Canadian Forces was that if the CH-146 was deployed, then the government might not want to spend money on a medium-lift helicopter and claim that one was not needed. This cannot be substantiated in the available documentation, even though it may have been part of the unwritten zeitgeist. There was already substantial criticism directed at the limitations of the CH-146 aircraft long before Afghanistan, even though the aircraft served well in Bosnia with SFOR and in Kosovo with KFOR where crews made the machines do things they were not designed to do. Mud stuck to the Griffon, as it did with the TUAV, long after that system matured and proved its capabilities.

A combination of factors most likely militated against the CH-146 deployment. First, the Chief of the Air Staff of the day was unenthusiastic and, given the choice between deploying CH-146s and the possibility of deploying CF-18s to Kandahar for a close support task, the CF-18s won out (though these were ultimately not deployed either). Second, General Hillier was skeptical about Canadian CH-146 operations while he was Commander Multinational Division (South-West) in Bosnia in 2001 and this possibly influenced him to focus on medium-lift helicopter acquisition. Third, the costs associated with deploying either or both helicopter and close air support capability were probably intimidating to some in the bureaucracy.[60] Once again, attempts at being economical compromised a holistic Canadian force structure approach that, as we will see in 2006-2008, reduced Canadian capability and forced Canada to go begging for other's aviation at crucial times with a resultant loss of influence in coalition circles.

Task Force Afghanistan Emerges

From May to August 2005, however, both the Herat and Kandahar options remained on the table as the planners sorted out what the new commitment to the south would look like. Hillier's intent as of May 2005 was that Canada would run the PRT for at least 18 months, with the brigade headquarters commanding Regional Command (South) and the battle group task force arriving in February 2006. The task force would deploy for 12 months, and the headquarters for nine. That would act as a catalyst for Stage III expansion and the introduction of the rotational NATO command for Regional Command (South). In other words, the Canadian commitment in the south was initially seen to be around two years, not the seven it eventually became. Keep in mind that the high level of violence that inundated the south had not happened yet and there were no indications that the

insurgency would go the distance. The commitment and force structure were predicated on framework and reconstruction tasks in a low-level counterinsurgency environment, not the near-conventional war that emerged in mid-2006.[61] This force would be called TF Afghanistan to differentiate it from TF Kabul.

Camp Julien would draw-down by October 2005 and transition the equipment and structures to the south. The Afghan National Training Centre presence and command staff and SAT-A would be retained in Kabul under command of TF Afghanistan. The task force for the south had to be robust – by this time the planners were well versed in the need to retain independent firepower capabilities. The basis of the task force structure was an artillery battery, a UAV troop, an electronic warfare detachment, a reconnaissance troop with Coyotes, engineering capabilities with counter-IED capacity, human intelligence and CIMIC teams, plus two LAV III-based infantry companies.[62]

By the end of June 2005, the four nations involved in Regional Command (South) and Stage III expansion transition continued their deliberations. All were looking towards a February-March 2006 change of command and the idea of a rotating brigade headquarters for Regional Command (South) was locked down. Importantly, the four nations agreed to establish a Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit at KAF to replace the American "Charlie Med" facility there.[63] Manned like a similar multinational installation established by the Stabilization Force in Bosnia, Canada agreed to command this extremely important facility that would in time save countless lives, Afghan as well as Canadian. Having a Role 3 rather than a Role 2 facility meant that more sophisticated medical procedures could be undertaken within minutes of an incident, rather than hours or even days. The Americans agreed to provide medical evacuation helicopters in the form of U.S. Army UH-60 Blackhawks and U.S. Air Force HH-60 Pave Hawks to support it.

At this point, the Romanians also agreed to continue with the KAF security mission, a role they accepted from the Canadians back in 2002. What had not been sorted out was how the American ETTs working with Afghan National Army forces in Regional Command (South) would be commanded once the transition to ISAF took place. NATO was standing up Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams, which were like ETTs without the logistics capacity, but they were not envisioned to be under TF Phoenix command (recall that TF Phoenix was an Operation ENDURING FREEDOM organization).[64]

Reaching a Decision

The Kandahar decision was made in the summer of 2005. The decision to deploy special operations forces was "unilaterally made by the Prime Minister" but because of the "unpredictable domestic political climate"; it was not publicized.[65] The deployment of conventional forces was not, however, *un fait accompli*. A strong 'Africa first' lobby with

sympathizers ensconced in DFAIT, CIDA, and even DND, countered that Canada should devote its military resources to either Darfur or the conflict in southern Sudan in a UN 'peacekeeping' capacity rather than a 'warfighting' capacity in Afghanistan under what they perceived to be American command. The 'Africa first' faction had built up support in academia, in part of the media, and even from some celebrities. Elements of this faction leveraged the emotionalism surrounding LGen Romeo Dallaire's role in the Rwandan genocide as an argument for Canadian intervention elsewhere in Africa. There were also continuing problems in Haiti and it looked as if there was going to be another Arab-Israeli peace agreement. As a result, the Martin government was forced to examine the cases for deploying troops to Darfur, southern Sudan, the Middle East, Haiti and Kandahar.

This sort of problem occurred in the past, particularly in the 1990s. The Canadian government, eager to satisfy everyone and offend no one, committed the Canadian Forces to multiple overseas missions without understanding sustainability. At one point, the Canadian Army was committed to Haiti, Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Cambodia, Somalia, then Rwanda and Kuwait. The military leadership of the day did not stand up to this enthusiasm and the result was forced burnout and logistics overstretch.

In 2005, the military leadership was not going to repeat the same mistakes from the Decade of Darkness. The Prime Minister was told that "The Canadian Forces can only sustain one overseas theatre operations base and cannot activate two theatres at once. Intelligence support, medical support, and logistical support are all major factors. A deployment of a second task force is feasible but risky." The planning staff worked through all of the possibilities and combinations, sorting pros and cons for each option. For example:

<u>Darfur</u>

Pros:

Nil.

Cons:

African Unity pride and independence;
few traditional allies;
many rebel groups;
only rebels seeking support of international community;
remote distant access;
seasonal road network; and
rudimentary development.

Or southern Sudan

Pros:

Multinational Stand-By High Readiness Brigade for UN operations.

Cons:

no mandate;
no invitation;
limited visibility internationally for Canada;
multi-factional fighting;
divergent interests; and
huge geography.

As for Afghanistan, the mission was a UN-mandated NATO operation. It was part of the larger campaign against the Al Qaeda movement and affiliated groups that threatened Canadian interests and values. Canada was already deeply involved in the process of rebuilding a failed state. Finally, the PRT and other activities were going to allow Canada to implement a "focused 3D approach" to synergize defence, development and diplomacy in a multi-lateral context. The Sudan, Darfur, Haiti and the Middle East met none of these criteria or conditions. Afghanistan did.[66]

Indeed, the staff made it clear that without continued involvement, as Canada had already committed to the future course of action by accepting a PRT, the fragile situation might collapse. The unstated result was that Canada would be contributing to something akin to Rwanda if the Taliban re-took the country and that other 9/11s would take place if Al Qaeda was able to base out of Afghanistan again.

The Martin government absorbed these arguments. In a series of communications between May and July 2005, the Prime Minister accepted the new mission in southern Afghanistan. The legal framework remained the same as it had since 2001 and the Prime Minister accepted the existing 2001-2003 strategic rationale for Canadian operations in Afghanistan as the basis for "air and ground combat operations directed against Al Qaeda, Taliban and anti-coalition armed groups within Afghanistan; other air and ground operations including the training of Afghan Security Forces, the creation of a Provincial Reconstruction Team; air interdiction operations against Al Qaeda, Taliban, HiG and other ACAG will be undertaken in international airspace; and other operations."[67]

On 15 September 2005, the CDS issued a deployment order:

> Canada will deploy a battalion-sized Task Force in February 2006 to RIP with a U.S. unit in Regional Command (South) while manning a PRT. Additionally a brigade headquarters will be deployed to assume command of Regional Command (South) under an OEF mandate and to lead a multi-national brigade. This Canadian contingent will lead the RC (South) transition from OEF to NATO command and play a lead role in Stage 3 expansion and the merger of the OEF and ISAF missions.[68]

While all of this planning was in progress, reports from Kandahar expressed concern about the assassination of Mullah Mawlavi Abdullah Fayaz, the top religious scholar who led the Kandahar Ulema Shura. His counterpart in Helmand, Haji Baba, was similarly killed, while another leading mullah, preparing to replace the murdered Mullah Lalojan, was publicly beheaded. There were also "increasing indicators of insecurity" in two provincial districts called Zharey and Panjwayi.[69]

ENDNOTES

1. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (25 April 2002) (5 July 2002).
2. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (October 2002).
3. As discussed in Maloney, *Enduring the Freedom*. See also JTFSWA ASSESSREP (12 November 2002).
4. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (16 August 2002) (26 August 2002).
5. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (13 March 2002) (26 April 2002).
6. CJTFSWA ASSESSREP (27 September 2002) (13 November 2002).
7. HQ ISAF report 44 (23 September 2003).
8. Message Burgess to distribution list, "NAC Discussions on Afghanistan" (22 October 2003).
9. HQ ISAF report 117 (5 December 2003).
10. Comd TFK SITREP Number 3, Week of 18 to 24 August 2003 (24 August 2003).
11. Comd TFK SITREP Number 1, Week of 3 to 12 August 2003 (10 August 2003).
12. Comd TFK SITREP Number 2, Week of 11 to 17 August 2003 (17 August 2003).
13. Comd TFK SITREP Number 7, Week of 15 to 21 September 2003 (22 September 2003).
14. Comd TFK SITREP Number 4, Week of 25 to 31 August 2003 (31 August 2003).
15. Ibid.
16. Comd TFK SITREP Number 5, Week of 1 to 7 September 2003 (8 August 2003).
17. Memorandum COS J3 to dl, 4 A 0013 2 G 1, "Afghan Planning-Transition/Exit Strategy Development" (19 September 2003).

18. Comd TFK SITREP Number 6, Week of 8 to 14 September 2003 (15 September 2003).
19. Ibid.
20. Comd TFK SITREP Number 8, Week of 22 to 28 September 2003 (30 September 2003).
21. SACEUR to CMC, "Possible Expansion of ISAF's Mandate in Afghanistan" (October 2003).
22. Message to NDCC, "NAC Meeting" (21 October 2003).
23. Message LFWA HQ to dl (22 August 2003).
24. COS SHAPE to dl, "ISAF Expansion-PRT Pilot Project" (7 October 2003).
25. Letter CDS and DM to MND, "Replacement Strategy: Canadian Forces Contribution to ISAF," Annex #1 Working Binder #1 (28 November 2003).
26. "Canada's Contribution to a PRT in Afghanistan" (4 May 2004).
27. Letter CDS to MND, "Possible Canadian Forces Contribution to Iraq" (7 September 2004).
28. COS J3 and J3 International to DCDS, "Op ARCHER-Staff Positions and ETT with CFC-A HQ" (21 October 2004).
29. There were, confusingly, several ISAF members that were involved in Afghan National Army training, but it was not controlled by ISAF. Rather TF Phoenix was the OEF entity that was the focal point of the effort and it reported to CJCMOTF.
30. 3350-165/A37 15 G 1, "Establishment of Op ARCHER" (22 October 2004).
31. "Mini-JSAT-PRT" (5 August 2004).
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Message to dl, "Deployment Order: PRT Strategic Reconnaissance Team" (7 September 2004).
35. "COS J3 Direction to Strategic Reconnaissance Team Leader-PRT" (18 October 2004).
36. 4 A 0013 Annex 1 5 G 2, "PRT SRT Report" (8 November 2004).
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Letter to the PM (7 December 2004).
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.

47. On 10 February 2005, NATO announced that ISAF would be further expanded, into the west of Afghanistan. The new area was RC (West) consisting of Badghis, Farah, Ghor, and Herat provinces. This process began on 31 May 2005, when ISAF took on command of two additional Provincial Reconstruction Teams, in the provinces of Herat and Farah and of a forward support base in Herat. At the beginning of September, two further ISAF-led PRTs in the west became operational, one in Chaghcharan, capital of Ghor province, and one in Qual'eh-ye Now, capital of Badghis province, completing ISAF's expansion into the west.
48. Briefing Note for the DCDS, "Report of Meetings in CENTCOM 7 March 2005: CF participation in Operations in Afghanistan" (11 March 2005).
49. Stuart Tootal, *Danger Close,* p. 27.
50. Ibid.
51. MLO report LCol R T Jensen (30 January 2005).
52. Tony Blair, *A Journey: My Political Life* (New York: Random House, 2010), pp. 602-603. His memoir neatly skirts the issue of the decision to commit British forces to Helmand, eradication policy, and the subsequent high level of violence.
53. "UK/NL/CA/ Afghanistan Quadripartite Conference: Military Talks" (13 April 2005).
54. Ibid.
55. "Stage 4 CONOPS OPG 3 May SITREP" (3 May 2005).
56. Quadrilateral Planning Conference with UK MOD (11-13 April 2005).
57. Hillier, *A Soldier First*, pp. 343-344.
58. "CF-18 Deployments-NRF versus OEF/ISAF" (8 June 2005).
59. "COS J3 Planning Guidance to J Staff for a Canadian Aviation Detachment in Afghanistan" (27 June 2005).
60. Leslie interview (26 October 2014). Some information is derived from a confidential interview conducted by the author on 11 January 2011 with a senior air force officer involved in helicopter operations during the period.
61. Presentation slides "Canadian Contribution to Afghanistan-Post-August 2005" (16 May 2005).
62. Ibid.
63. "Minutes of the ISAF Stage 3 Planning Conference 22 June 2005" (29 June 2005).
64. Ibid.
65. WikiLeaks, message American Embassy Ottawa to State, "Canada Agrees to Provide Special Operations Forces to OEF" (8 June 2005).
66. Draft Briefing with CDS input "CF Operations for Afghanistan Post-August 2005" (21 July 2005).
67. CDS Directive, "Campaign Planning in Support of CF Transition from Kabul to Kandahar, Afghanistan" (August 2005).
68. Message to dl, "Deployment Order: Afghanistan Transition Planning Conference 27 September-1 October, Qatar" (15 September 2005).
69. Message, Canadian Joint Delegation to the North Atlantic Council to NDHQ (9 August 2005).

OPERATION ARCHER:

THE PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM IN KANDAHAR, JULY 2005-JANUARY 2006

Transition: Task Force Kabul and Task Force Afghanistan

Dealing with the complexities of closing down Canadian Army operations in Kabul and standing up operations in Kandahar required significant coordination and leadership. In effect, TF Kabul and the new TF Afghanistan operated side-by-side temporarily as the mission transitioned. TF Kabul had to maintain Recce Squadron and the ASIC in support of the upcoming fall provincial elections in Kabul and stand up support for the Strategic Advisory Team, while simultaneously drawing down Camp Julien and the Canadian support structures. At the same time, the PRT was moving into a repurposed cannery eventually called Camp Nathan Smith in Kandahar – and a new task force was required to support them. TF Kabul, during this time, continued with the long-established surveillance tasks in and around Kabul. Essentially, these supported the run-up to KMNB's provincial voter registration operations. In early August 2005, TF Kabul Roto 3 under Col Semianiw handed off control to Col Steve Noonan's TF Kabul Roto 4, which then became TF Afghanistan on 17 September 2005.[1]

Col Noonan and his chief of staff, LCol David Anderson, were the prime movers in this process. *Ad hocery* was not going to work, so long before the new TF Afghanistan headquarters even deployed, they established their campaign plan before they left. Using the Cartier Drill Hall in Ottawa as a planning area, the new TF Afghanistan staff war-gamed the whole process.[2]

It was a serious challenge during this time as the Signals world had to maintain communications in Kandahar, Kabul, and for the large convoys that would be moving along Highway 1 between the two cities. The same went for the Electrical and Mechanical Engineers' 'wrench benders' – convoys could not afford to break down as they passed through the disputed provinces of Wardak, Ghazni and Zabul. Keep in mind, of course, that these were not mere administrative moves and there was a growing insurgency in the country. Every aspect of the transition was, in theory, subject to enemy attack. Both organizations were beefed up to deal with the transition.[3]

A LAV III company from 2 RCR and the NSE handled security for the move. A series of recces, dubbed Operation CARTIER, were conducted along the 450 kilometre route; 450 kilometres was a long, long way in Afghanistan, so the magnitude of what

TF Afghanistan was going to do should not be underestimated. Either the convoys had to go from protected way station to protected way station, or they had to be completely self-sufficient from a defensive point of view and be able to leaguer next to the road at night. These options were called "Tunnel of Steel" and "Running Gun." In the end a combination was employed, with a way station in Gardez.

The idea was that TF Afghanistan would cease Kabul operations between mid-September and early October, once the provincial elections were completed. However, on 8 October 2005, there was a massive earthquake in Pakistan. The Canadian government decided to deploy the Disaster Assistance Response Team to the stricken region. TF Afghanistan, in the middle of its complex preparations, was under some pressure to assist with Operation PLATEAU but because of tight timelines, it was only able to deploy CIMIC personnel for assessment purposes and some medical personnel from its Role 2 hospital to augment the effort.[4]

On 22 October 2005, Operation ATLAS commenced and the first convoys headed for Kandahar. There was one IED attack against a convoy on Highway 1, which produced no casualties but unfortunately, Pte Scott Woodfield from 2 RCR was killed when his LAV III rolled over on Highway 1 on 25 November. Operation ATLAS continued into early December. The enemy also reminded Canadians during the transition that TF Kabul operations were not exactly benign either. On 15 September, there was an IED strike against a Royal Canadian Dragoons Coyote, wounding two soldiers.[5] The safe arrival of all of the Operation ATLAS convoys in Kandahar, save one in the course of nearly two months, was a monumental success not only from a logistics standpoint but also from a strategic one. Operation ATLAS demonstrated that large convoys could be conducted down Highway 1 in a hostile environment at that time. The enemy's inability to interfere, disrupt or destroy the Canadian task force while it was on the move meant that operations down south in Kandahar in 2006 could proceed on time – and on target.

TF Afghanistan established itself in an empty compound at KAF across from the plywood shacks that housed the 173rd Airborne Brigade; that compound remained the location of all future TF Afghanistan incarnations until 2011. A construction troop from 191 Airfield Engineering Flight flew in from Canadian Forces Base Comox and, working with the task force engineers, started to build the bed-down facilities that would house future Canadian Army contingents coming into KAF.[6]

All was not well, however. The insurgency in southern Afghanistan was gaining momentum. Ironically, the altruistic Western relief efforts in the wake of the Pakistan earthquake inadvertently poured money into the coffers of jihadist organizations in that stricken country. The skeletal Taliban structures that scurried across the Durand Line in 2002 to avoid the wrath of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM were recovering. With more money, they became tanned and fit – and ready for a re-match.[7]

The War in the South, 2005

The decision to send a Canadian PRT to Kandahar province in spring 2005 now had to be implemented on the ground. Like SAT-A, the Canadian Army had never deployed anything quite like a PRT and still had to figure out how it would be structured and what it would do. To complicate matters further, the Canadian PRT had to operate as part of an American brigade combat team that was engaged not only in an unorthodox conflict but was operating in a complex command and control environment.

The 173rd Airborne Brigade formed the basis of Combined Task Force (CTF) Bayonet. This task force consisted of an infantry battalion, an airborne artillery battalion re-roled as infantry and a reconnaissance company, plus logistical support structures. Its operating area included Nimruz, Helmand, Zabul and part of Kandahar provinces (for comparative purposes, this understrength brigade was responsible for an area that would eventually boast three brigades of ISAF troops by 2007 and nearly two divisions by 2010).

CTF Bayonet was supposed to take over three PRTs: Helmand, Kandahar and Zabul. When Canada committed to Kandahar, the brigade became responsible for two. Special operations forces from TF 71 and then TF 31 handled Oruzgan province with the Australian SAS, while the Dutch and French special forces operated in Registan, Shorabak, Spin Boldak and Maruf districts of Kandahar province on the border with Pakistan. The special operations forces all reported to the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force Afghanistan (CJSOTF-A), not CTF Bayonet, but could wind up operating in the Bayonet area of operations at any time.[8]

TF Gun Devils, the 3-319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment led by Lt Col Bert Ges, was responsible for the rest of Kandahar province. It consisted of an infantry company, an artillery platoon, an anti-tank platoon, a Romanian mechanized platoon and a military police platoon. There was an Afghan National Army kandak of three companies, but one company worked with the special operations forces, and one was used as static guards in a forward operation base in Shah Wali Kot district.

In terms of the Kandahar PRT, its rotation schedule was out of phase with CTF Bayonet and TF Gun Devils. It was scheduled to leave in June 2005, while the Canadian PRT was not scheduled to arrive until August. Bayonet and Gun Devils had to find some means to cover the gap but for nearly two months, PRT operations ceased. Compared to the incoming organization, the existing American PRT was small in numbers and oriented more toward force protection in a CIMIC-like role as opposed to a capacity-building or development role. There was a Civil Affairs organization at the brigade level, and there were Commanders Emergency Response Programme monies, but these were dedicated to Civil Affairs tasks, not long-term development. There was no connection between the PRT and the NSP or any of the other national programmes starting up in Kabul.[9]

As for security force capacity building, the Afghan National Army had its 205 Corps HQ stationed in Kandahar, but there was only one understrength infantry kandak, a combat support kandak and an embryonic combat service support kandak. There were some ETTs, but the Afghan National Army in Kandahar was far from combat ready in 2005. As for the police, there was a 20-man Military Police Mobile Training Team working with DynCorp contractors who ran the new Regional Training Center, plus two small Police Mentoring Teams working with the Border Police. For the most part, the existing police were un- or partially trained former AMF fighters.[10]

TF Gun Devils set out to learn what was going on in their area of operations. The pattern of enemy activity between February 2004 and January 2005 was undeveloped. There were IEDs but only in small numbers. The Gun Devils learned that, as early as February 2004, a 'spider device' IED was discovered in Sperwan in Panjwayi district and there had been an attack on a voter registration site in Talukan, also in Panjwayi district. The largest reconstruction project underway in the province was the Japan International Cooperation Agency-funded Ring Road paving project, which was paving Highway 1 from Kandahar City to Helmand province to the west and Highway 4 from KAF to Kandahar City. From October 2004 to April 2005, there were seven IEDs detonated on Highway 1, three in Panjwayi district in the Mushan-Bazaar-e Panjwayi road and three attacks on Highway 4. These IEDs employed various types of detonators hooked up to artillery and mortar shells. Casualties were minimal as none of the devices were large enough to destroy coalition patrol vehicles.[11]

The bulk of enemy activity in early 2005 appeared to be in the mountainous and rugged Shah Wali Kot and Mianishin districts in the northern part of the province. As road paving between Kandahar City and Tarinkot in Oruzgan got underway in spring, the paving crews and their security engaged Taliban forces in those districts. As operations continued, ISTAR analysis determined that the overall leader for enemy operations in Khakrez, Shah Wali Kot and Mianishin districts was Mullah (Hayatullah) Khan, who commanded eight cells of 15 or so fighters, plus two IED cells.[12]

The rest of Taliban activity in Kandahar focused on the city. Mullah Osmani, a prominent Taliban leader during the regime, led the Kandahar group. His lieutenants were Hafiz Majid and Mullah Baqi. In 2004, they initially controlled three direct action cells (15 or so personnel per cell), an IED cell and a logistics cell. This organization essentially doubled in size by early 2005.[13] (See Figure 9-1)

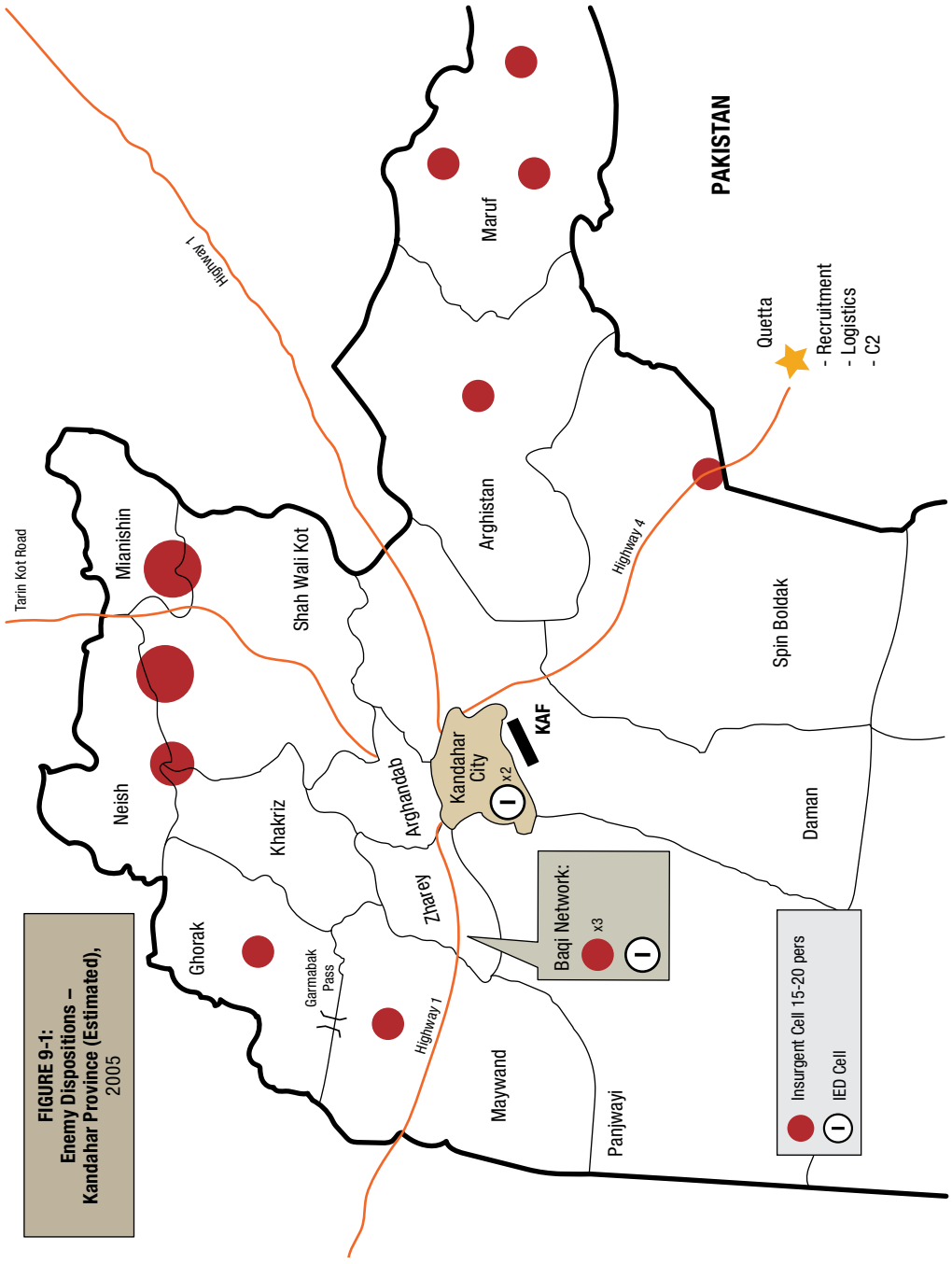


Figure 9-1: Enemy Dispositions – Kandahar Province (Estimated), 2005

In 2005, CTF Bayonet's and TF Gun Devils' primary task was to protect the National Assembly and Provincial Council Elections (NAPCE) process. NAPCE involved voter registration, the creation of a candidate list, campaigning, ballot distribution, then ballot collection and counting. Analogous to the national elections of 2004, the provincial elections of 2005 were key to extending the reach of the government into the rural area, and gaining legitimacy for both the government and the international community reconstruction efforts supporting it. ISTAR analysis anticipated that the enemy would pull out all the stops to interfere with NAPCE elements and phases to thwart Afghan government aims. The provincial elections were an important centre of gravity for the coalition forces and as such, it was a priority to disrupt the insurgents – wherever they might be.[14]

TF Gun Devils looked at the NAPCE timeline and crafted a campaign plan to support it. The elections were in September 2005. There would be three phases to the Gun Devils plan: the first had a manoeuvre focus. Until August, TF Gun Devils would conduct a series of operations in Shah Wali Kot and Mianishin districts to disrupt the enemy there. Another smaller operation would sweep through Zharey and Panjwayi districts. Then, in August, once the Canadian PRT was on the ground, a shift would occur into a phase that had a security and information operations focus. The infantry companies would then spread out into the communities with the Afghan security forces, distribute aid in conjunction with the CTF Bayonet Civil Affairs unit and the PRT, and conduct leadership engagements. Then, the forces would pull back; the Afghans would handle election site and polling station security while the task force would act as a QRF if there was trouble.[15]

The main TF Gun Devils operations in Shah Wali Kot, DIABLO REACH and DIABLO REACHBACK, turned into unanticipated and serious gunfights. Ambush activity then increased significantly on Highway 1 throughout the summer of 2005. This forced TF Gun Devils to re-assess what it was up against. The pattern of enemy activity, it turned out, was much deeper and broader than TF Bronco had either assessed or dealt with back in 2004. In June and July, there were near constant reports that Arab, Chechen and Punjabi fighters and bomb makers were entering the province to make up for local losses incurred by the Shah Wali Kot and Mianishin Taliban cells during TF Gun Devils' operations. Three prominent and vocal anti-Taliban Afghan religious leaders were also assassinated, as were an administrator in Shah Wali Kot and a judge in Panjwayi district. A convoy from the JEMB was also attacked in Maywand district. Six Taliban mullahs moved from rural area to rural area, spreading Taliban propaganda.[16]

As it turned out, there had been a meeting of the Taliban leadership body, the Quetta Shura, sometime in early June. Mullah Baqi, leader of the cells in Zharey and Panjwayi districts and former deputy minister for information and culture in the Taliban regime, met with Mullah Dadullah, Mullah Osmani and Mullah Mansour to look at ways and means

to generate feuds between the tribes, attack the security forces and undermine the 2005 elections. TF Gun Devils was essentially caught up in the early stages of this campaign.[17]

The new higher levels and types of enemy activity now seen in Afghanistan were not limited to Kandahar province; the Taliban and its supporters were a noticeably greater problem throughout the south in late 2004 and throughout 2005. CJSOTF's TF 71 led by Lt Col Paul Burton, and its replacement, TF 31, led by Lt Col Don Bolduc, were responsible for Tier II special operations conducted in southern and eastern Afghanistan. During the course of their operations in Oruzgan province in spring 2005, both commanders noted a distinct shift in how the enemy operated and those patterns were later identified in Zabul as well. U.S. Special Forces started taking more and more casualties from direct fire attacks, not just from IEDs. On numerous sensitive site exploitation missions, special operations forces discovered evidence of Chechen trainers and other foreign fighters from Arab countries working alongside the Taliban cells. One operation even photographed dead foreign leaders and fighters.[18]

When TF 71 and TF 31 commanders compared notes with the development agenda coming out of Kabul and looked at the attempts by the enemy to interfere with governance in Kandahar province, they concluded that the environment in the south was not permissive enough yet for development and sought to convince CJTF-76 and CFC-A that the tactical situation was changing. They were told that NATO would refuse to accept their assessments as it did not play well with political messaging to get NATO to take over the mission, and that NATO wanted to do stabilization and not do counterinsurgency – despite what might or might not be happening. There was a growing level of denial in Kabul about how dangerous the south was becoming. Maj Gen Kamiya and Lt Gen Eikenberry explained to Lt Col Bolduc that they could not acknowledge the situation officially because of the political realities surrounding ISAF expansion, but that TF 31 was to continue with its operations and develop a better picture of the situation throughout 2005.[19]

Operation ARCHER: The Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kandahar

Col Steve Bowes led the first Canadian PRT in Kandahar. Working with the Joint Operations Group in Kingston and studying the existing PRTs in Afghanistan, particularly the British PRT at Mazar-e Sharif, Col Bowes concluded that the best approach was for the Kandahar PRT to move away from CIMIC-like projects and focus on enabling security sector reform operations and larger reconstruction efforts. That, in the planner's view, would be a greater contributor to establishing security in the province. Tactical CIMIC would only take things so far: Afghan capacity to govern at the provincial and local levels had to be developed before any area of operations could be stabilized and secured. This meant that the PRT had to build relationships so it could build capacity and facilitate development.[20]

The PRT had to understand the environment that it – and its successors – had to operate in. None of those data existed. What, exactly, was the state of development in the province? How would those activities, if there were any, relate to the national programmes starting up in Kabul? The PRT had to be structured to acquire that information.

Photo Credit: Author

In 2005, a former cannery in northeast Kandahar City was transformed into Camp Nathan Smith, home of the Canadian-led Provincial Reconstruction Team, here seen from the air facing southwest. Downtown Kandahar City is in the distance.

The Canadian government representatives involved in the decision to deploy the PRT wanted to adopt what was called at the time the 'All of Government' approach in Afghanistan. In the 1990s, an American general, Charles Krulak, coined the term 'three block war' as a means of describing concurrent fighting and development activities in the failed states of that era. This became a conceptual fad in United States defence circles which was then adapted by General Rick Hillier to become the '3D' approach – defence, diplomacy and development – in which all three government entities were supposed to work in unison toward Canadian national objectives in a given target country.

There had never been a practical application of this idea in the Canadian context before and the operationalization of it had never really been thought through. This challenge was presented to Col Bowes and the Joint Operations Group planners to sort out. Consequently, the PRT was going to include a CIDA team for development, a Foreign Affairs team for governance and an RCMP team for policing. There were other government aid agencies working in the area, specifically USAID and the British Department for International Development (DFID). Both agreed to have their provincial representatives join the PRT. Collectively, these were the 'OGDs' or Other Government Departments.

At the same time, however, there was a war on and the PRT was forced to contribute to the more 'kinetic' aspects of that, despite what everyone wanted to do. TF Bronco's PRT had been used (some might say misused) as a manoeuvre company to handle the Kandahar City area of operations and not as a capacity-building tool. There were indications that CTF Bayonet intended that the Canadian PRT take on the role of first responder in the vast maze-like city.[21]

The Canadian PRT in Kandahar, established at Camp Nathan Smith in the northeast district of the city, resembled no other Canadian Army organization in history. The 235-person PRT had four major sections: the OGDs, a Patrol Company, Military Function Enablers and Support. Based on B Company, 3 PPCLI, the Patrol Company consisted of two patrol platoons equipped with G Wagon armoured patrol vehicles. The functional enablers included a counter-IED/EOD disposal team with its Bison armoured personnel carriers and robots, a CIMIC team, a psychological operations team and a small intelligence cell. There was also a group of 'PRT Police,' which were militia forces formerly controlled by Abdul Raziq but hired by the PRT. Col Tor Jan's militia platoon essentially handled local security, accompanied the patrols as escorts and facilitators, and conducted HUMINT for local force protection purposes. Broadly speaking, the Patrol Company, combat engineers and EOD disposal team, and Col Tor Jan's men acted as a protective 'delivery system' for OGDs and their activities.[22]

Notably, the deficiencies regarding CIDA-CF operations in Kabul were taken to heart. The new commanders in Ottawa allocated $1 million to the PRT, styling it a "Commanders Contingency Fund" so "unforeseen gaps" that presented themselves during the transition from a United States-funded PRT to a Canadian-funded one could be dealt with. The Commanders Contingency Fund was also established "to allow the Commander to influence his area of operations in a timely manner by having the financial means to address mission-specific needs."[23]

Operating in Kandahar Province and the City

The Kandahar PRT personnel got to know Kandahar City and Kandahar province districts intimately. Most of the B Company soldiers had served during the 2002 rotation but their knowledge of the province was limited to the area around KAF. Now, three years later, they ranged far and wide during assessment patrols and OGD escort tasks. Kandahar City was inhabited by at least 500 000 people, with probably another 500 000 in the immediate environs. There were no street signs, few attempts at urban planning, and no traffic control systems, so the patrols nicknamed key routes and locations. There was Electronic Square, where appliances were for sale. There was the Crop Circle, a traffic circle with wheat growing on it. The rusting remains of a huge crane dominated Crane Route. Martyr's Circle was the equivalent of a cenotaph. The most dangerous route was Highway 4

from the Golden Arches, the eastern gateway, to KAF. Highway 4 joined Highway 1 on Angle Road heading west: these areas canalized movement and were susceptible to IED attacks (this was also the site of a massive Mujahideen ambush in 1982, which destroyed 30 Soviet vehicles and resulted in the Soviets bulldozing the buildings along the road).[24] The northern 'cone' of the city was the Loy Wala area, a virtual 'no-go' area believed to be infested with Taliban sympathizers.[25] (See Figure 9-2)

Key locations that the Patrol Company delivered its CIMIC, DFAIT, CIDA, USAID, DFID and RCMP charges to in the city included the Governor's Palace, the Guesthouse, the Provincial Development Committee, the police station complex and 205 Corps HQ. For example, if the CIDA representative needed to meet with the Provincial Development Committee, a patrol of three or four G Wagons with armed crews planned the operation. Routes to and from the PRT to the meeting site had to be varied and randomized to disrupt enemy targeting. The most dangerous leg was the return leg, since everybody had to eventually come home to Camp Nathan Smith and the routes nearby were few, which increased predictability. There were blind alleys, road debris, donkey carts and throngs of people, many of them wearing burkas. In this environment, troop discipline was at a premium so the wrong people did not get shot. Low-level leadership had to be top notch. Killing the wrong people could generate a riot or mass demonstration, which in turn would have spillover effects on other operations if other forces had to become involved.[26]

Photo Credit: Author

Canadian Provincial Reconstruction Team patrols in 2005 were faced with dilapidated municipal infrastructure and a virtual lack of municipal governance. This patrol has parked its G Wagons next to a human waste dump in the city's core while conducting a school site assessment.

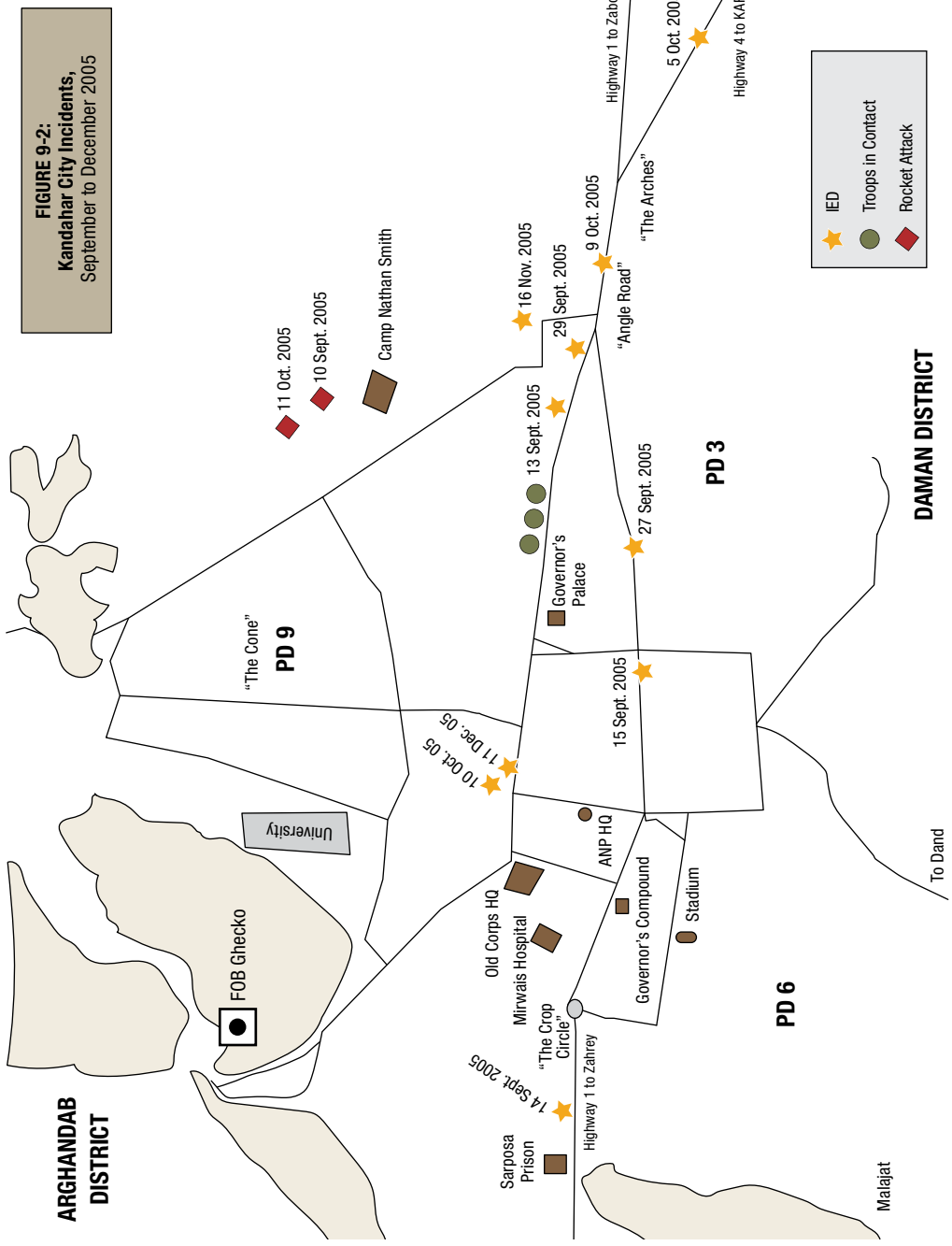


Figure 9-2: Kandahar City Incidents, September to December 2005

As the PRT pushed out into the rural districts more and more in the fall of 2005, the diversity of the terrain and the stark beauty of Kandahar province were more apparent. (See Figure 9-3)

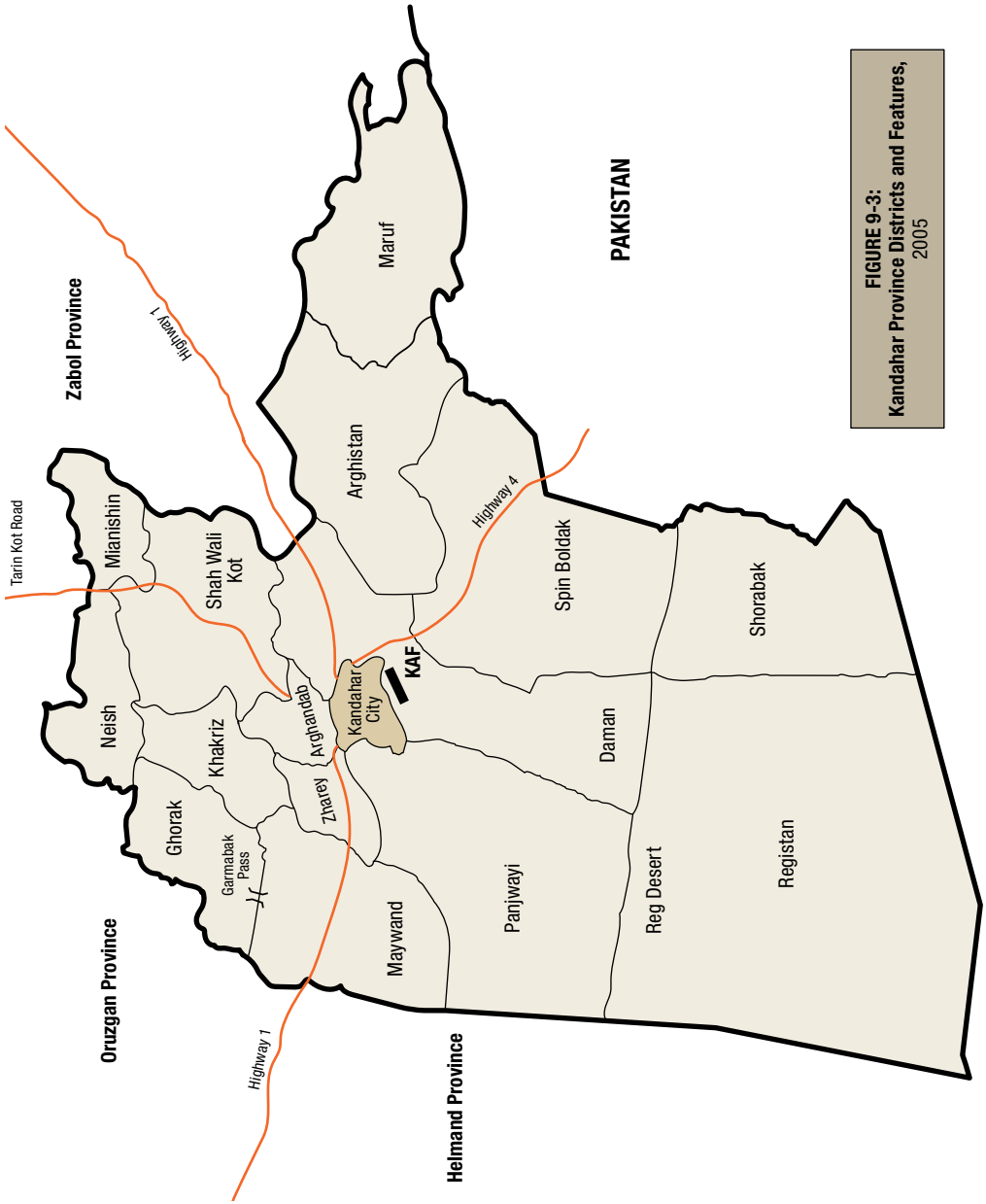


Figure 9-3: Kandahar Province Districts and Features, 2005

Each district – and the PRT visited nearly all of them in those early months – had its own special characteristics. Registan and Shorabak contained the Registan Desert (interchangeably called the Reg Desert or the Red Desert by coalition forces), with undulating sand dunes, rock outcroppings and Kutchie nomads on camels. Maruf was a rugged, mountainous district with broad valleys abutting the Pakistan border, with Spin Boldak sandwiched between Registan, Shorabak and Maruf. "Spin B" was the regional trade entry point for Highway 4 past KAF to Kandahar City – it had been a regional entry point for over 1 000 years.[27]

The Arghandab River cut across the province. Several districts cradled the river and its vital water supply from all sides: Maywand in the west; Zharey and Panjwayi with their grape fields to the north and south; into Arghandab with its orchards; up into the rocky Shah Wali Kot and Mianishin districts; and on to Oruzgan province. Ghorak, Khakrez and Nesh districts were remote, rural districts to the northwest, shielded by mountainous barriers and few roads. South of the city, prosperous and populated Dand connected Panjwayi with the area surrounding KAF, while to the east of KAF, rugged Arghistan linked the city with Maruf. Highway 1 ran through the province from Zabul to Helmand.[28]

The PRT personnel rapidly appreciated that there was human terrain superimposed on the geographical terrain. A soldier from the 2002 rotation knew that there were Pashtun 'tribals' working for the coalition against the Taliban; it was a binary situation. If that same soldier came back to the province in 2005, he or she learned that there were nearly 26 different Pashtun tribal groupings and sub-groupings in the province, roughly divided into two confederations, the Durrani and Ghilzai. Allegiances shifted along with economic interests and power agendas so it was no easy matter trying to figure out who was who and what they wanted, especially with the influx of aid monies pending and deliberate attempts by the Taliban to aggravate inter-tribal disputes and tensions. The PRT gained insight into those dynamics during the course of the first rotation and this served future Canadian rotations well for the next five years.[29]

Photo Credit: Author

Provincial Reconstruction Team patrols to Spin Boldak on the border with Pakistan revealed that, despite their use of crayons instead of pixels, the Afghan powers had a more detailed understanding of the border situation than the coalition forces.

The Improvised Explosive Device War Starts in the South

The Canadian PRT, like Canadian units in Kabul, included an EOD capability for force protection purposes. The use of IEDs was not new in Kandahar province; anti-government forces employed the first ones in spring 2003. Those devices were comparatively unsophisticated but Operation ENDURING FREEDOM took the necessary steps to establish a Combined Explosives Exploitation Cell (CEX-C, pronounced 'sexy') in 2003-2004 as there was concern about the migration of IED tactics from Iraq to Afghanistan. CEX-C tracked weapon 'signatures' and procedures, collected information on bomb makers and support cells, and educated incoming units on the threat; Canadian EOD teams eventually developed a relationship with this cell at KAF.

The evolution of IEDs in the south was dramatic in 2005. The most primitive IEDs consisted of artillery or mortar shells rigged to some form of detonator that the victim activated: this was essentially an improvised mine. This type of device evolved into the pressure-plate IED, where the weight of a passing vehicle or person pressed two halves of a saw blade together to complete an electric circuit and then detonate the explosive. Another variant was the crush-plate IED.

Radio-controlled devices started to appear later on in the tour; these devices permitted the controlled targeting of a specific vehicle or person using a cell phone to detonate the IED. These 'radio controlled' IEDs also evolved. As insurgents learned that coalition vehicles were increasingly equipped with electronic countermeasures equipment in 2004, bomb makers developed the 'spider device.' An antenna was set up outside the range of the jammer, and then linked by a wire to the bomb. A 'button man' could observe the movement of the vehicle from a distance and carry out his attack.

All of these types of devices were in play in 2005 when the PRT arrived. The number of attacks in Kandahar province, however, was comparatively low. Between October 2004 and April 2005, seven IEDs detonated on Highway 1, three in Panjwayi district and three on Highway 4. Two detonated in May-July, another four in August. All of these attacks were against security forces.[30]

Photo Credit: DND AR2005-A01-145a

By fall 2005, Kandahar City was immersed in an urban terrorist campaign that favoured improvised explosive devices. Here, a Canadian explosive ordnance device team measures the 'blast seat' of one such device near a choke point dubbed "The Arches" in the west end.

Significant changes occurred between late August and October 2005, indicating that there was a shift in Taliban operational thinking. The first was the discovery of a 'cooking pot' IED cache in the Loy Wala area after a number of these devices had been detonated in a Kandahar City market. In this case, the targets were civilians, not the security forces. The second and more spectacular was the use of suicide vehicle-borne IEDs in which a vehicle, be it bicycle, motorcycle, donkey cart, car or SUV, was packed with explosives and detonated by the driver in an act of suicide. A 'SVBIED' or suicide vehicle-borne IED was used to attack a Canadian PRT patrol on 5 October 2005; this was the first use of such a device against Canadian forces.

Suicide vehicle-borne IEDs were qualitatively different from other attacks. First, the idea that a human being would commit suicide to kill Canadian troops was sensational enough for the media to warrant increased attention. This only benefitted the insurgents and their cause – there is no such thing as bad publicity. Second, the explosive power of these devices and the havoc they wrought on a densely packed urban environment was more terrifying that an improvised mine blowing up a police truck in a remote district like Ghorak. The combination of these elements – mass damage, the generation of widespread fear, morbid media interest in spectacular forms of death – changed the IED war. What had been a tactical device designed for tactical effects now became a tactical device that had tactical, operational and strategic effects all at once, overnight.

Photo Credit: DND AR2005-A01-238aVBIED5Oct05

By late fall, the opposition employed suicide IED attacks, including suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices. Here, a provincial reconstruction team patrol in its Gun Shield Kit G Wagons awaits the EOD team on Highway 4 near 'no-drug' mountain.

Tactically and operationally, the PRT patrols had to alter their procedures and increase security, which reduced the number of sorties they could do. In turn, it reduced the number of times the OGD personnel could go out and do their job, which had potential knock-on effects on programme delivery. This 'sortie rate' could and did improve once the patrols got comfortable with the new procedures, but the IED threat introduced a new level of danger that increased negative psychological effects on the whole process.

In terms of operational and strategic effects, the generation of an atmosphere of fear in the city seriously reduced public support for the government, and reduced the willingness of unprotected aid agencies to operate there and in the province. The curtailment of aid and reconstruction projects in Kandahar meant that the government would lose even more credibility with the population, who had been promised aid and reconstruction. This situation could be, and was, exploited by the insurgents not only in the province but also throughout southern Afghanistan. That bought the enemy time to target the population and intimidate their local leaders. This is exactly what happened in Shah Wali Kot district from August to October 2005.

IEDs and suicide vehicle-borne IEDs, in effect, introduced a great deal of friction into the coalition's effort to stabilize Kandahar province. Between September 2005 and January 2006, the PRT Patrol Company and the EOD teams responded to over 20 IED-associated incidents in Kandahar City. The Patrol Company, in its lightly armoured G Wagons, was attacked on four occasions, three of which resulted in severe wounds and death of Canadian personnel. The year 2005 marked the start of Canada's six-year fight against the enemy's IED cells in Kandahar province.

The 2005 Elections

The NAPCE elections process was starting just as the Canadian PRT arrived. TF Gun Devils assessments concluded that the enemy military forces in Shah Wali Kot were disrupted and that any overt threat to the election would come from the Baqi network in Zharey and Panjwayi districts. The actual level of enemy anti-elections activity in the province, however, took different forms. A JEMB team was threatened in Pashmul, Zharey district. There were several assassinations in September in the elections run up: one in Panjwayi with two mullahs gunned down; another in Shah Wali Kot with three government workers killed. Subsequent to those attacks, the district chief in Khakrez, an elections candidate, and three of his bodyguards were murdered. Another government worker was killed in Arghandab. The detonation of IEDs in a Kandahar City market was thought to be part of the intimidation campaign.[31]

CTF Bayonet saw PRT activities in the coordination and reconstruction realm as contributing to the success of the elections in a very broad sense. Any positive steps taken to support or assist the Afghans were deemed part of this effort. Aside from routine operations, however, the PRT contributed in other ways.

The PRT, working with TF Gun Devils, played a role in the establishment of the Joint Coordination Centre (JCC). This organization was originally set up to handle the Afghan National Army, Afghan police, National Directorate of Security and coalition security force coordination during the elections. The Afghan National Army's Provincial

Reaction Force was prepared to intervene anywhere the insurgents threatened the polling process. The Joint Coordination Centre was so successful that it became a permanent fixture of the coalition security apparatus by 2006 and continued in various forms well past 2011.[32]

Photo Credit: Author

Another important Provincial Reconstruction Team function was assessing the population's attitudes toward reconstruction, government and insurgency. The psychological operations section, led by Sgt Reg Obas, was responsible for this task.

The PRT Patrol Company and the EOD teams were prepared to deploy to any incidents in the city during the elections. The lack of substantial coalition forces dictated this role. The Election Support Force, an ad hoc NATO organization that surged into the country for the 2004 elections, would not be surging to the south. A single American light infantry battalion, with its four companies, was brought in and scattered throughout Regional Commands East and South. One company was stationed at KAF as a QRF for the province.[33] There were four understrength infantry companies to handle election security for Kandahar province, one of which came from the PRT.

The level of election violence on 18 September 2005 was minimal. There were conflicting views on why this was so. Some Taliban leaders in Quetta announced in a radio broadcast that there would be a cease-fire during the elections. Not all Taliban commanders agreed and were prepared to go ahead with their plans. At the same time, HiG spokesmen said that they would disrupt the elections no matter what the Taliban did. Coupled with this was a shortage of funds –and Taliban money was not getting where it needed to go in the province. This lowered the motivation for some local commanders or sympathizers to mount attacks. One cannot rule out the overt disruptive operations in Shah Wali Kot by TF Gun Devils and the security measures put in place in the city by the Afghans, the PRT and coalition forces. The combination of these factors clearly gave the Quetta Shura some pause. The Taliban leadership backed off from its plans to attack polling stations. The Quetta Shura

decided to send in some new leadership and IED capabilities after the election, a move that likely indicated a lack of confidence in its existing command and control relationships.[34]

Even so, voter turnout in Kandahar was among the lowest in the country. Of 744 952 registered voters, 25.3% of them voted. Oruzgan was bad at 23% but Zabul was worst, at 20.1%. Helmand, which would become an extremely problematic province in 2006–2007, had 36.8% voter turnout. The rest of the country was greater than 50%, in some cases, in the 60% range.[35]

This low turnout could be in part attributed to Taliban violence and intimidation. However, when the PRT sent out CIMIC and psychological operations patrols after the election, they learned that the combination of a lack of government presence in the rural areas coupled with police corruption (in some cases police extorted money from people so they could vote) was producing a serious loss of confidence in the government in some districts. Indeed, the unequal distribution of aid and reconstruction resources by the provincial government, something seriously aggravated by tribal dynamics, was providing momentum to this discontent.[36]

Disarmament and Demobilization Programmes

The heavy weapons cantonment programme was successfully implemented in Kandahar province at some point prior to the arrival of TF Gun Devils and the Canadian PRT. Camp Sherzai, the 1/205 Brigade headquarters located near KAF, held T-55 tanks, BMP infantry fighting vehicles and a variety of multiple rocket launch vehicles in varying stages of maintenance and decay. In 2005, the next stage of the DDR process was underway and, once on the ground, the PRT became involved in reporting on the Disbandment of Illegally Armed Groups (DIAG) programme through its contacts with the provincial governor. Where heavy weapons cantonment and DDR focused on large militia formations, DIAG looked at smaller armed entities. It was one thing to take away and canton the 30 or so tanks under the control of the Kandahar militias, but it was another to identify and then disarm 20 or 30 armed militia that swore allegiance to a local commander in the hills or to a narco baron. It was also an anathema to Afghan culture where every man is supposed to be a warrior. A rifle is seen as a basic component of his identity.

In general, the idea was to coax the Afghans into processing such people through DDR, and give them a choice of joining the Army or the police. If a particular group proved too reticent, a provincial government DIAG committee was supposed to apply peer pressure and other non-violent means to get the job done. The PRT CIMIC team provided the coalition representative to the committee. The DIAG process in Kandahar was slow and subject to manipulative local politics. Like everything else, DIAG became part of the larger power dynamic between the tribal confederations, tribal groupings and their leaders. The PRT believed with some justification that caches of arms remained deliberately unidentified by entities hedging their bets.[37]

The PRT was also involved in observing the 15th Division ammunition storage issue. This massive Soviet-era bunkered storage facility northeast of the city had been hit hard during the air campaign in 2001. There were ongoing attempts by demining crews to get into the area so that remaining ammunition could be destroyed or salvaged for Afghan National Army use. Concerns had been raised about illegally armed groups, not just the insurgents, accessing the facility. The PRT CIMIC team worked with various Afghan government and non-governmental organization entities to reduce the threat posed by this problem.[38]

Policing

As for policing, the two RCMP officers at the PRT prioritized an assessment of the state of law enforcement in Kandahar. Sharia law, under the Taliban, was medieval and brutal. The pre-Taliban legal system, like the bureaucracy, had completely collapsed. There was a prison. There were people in uniform carrying weapons that were called 'police.' However, no readily apparent 'connective tissue' linking policing to law to courts to incarceration existed. There was, in effect, no legal system outside the Pashtunwali social code and between it and the new Constitution.[39]

The reality was that most of the 'police' in Kandahar province were militia – fighters that had been 'DDR'd' and 'DIAG'd.' The Border Police was, essentially, Abdul Raziq's private militia given vehicles and uniforms and then labeled 'Border Police.' Similarly, the Highway Police on Highway 1 were former AMF associated with at least three local commanders who extracted 'tolls' on truck traffic.[40]

The problem was that the 2001 Bonn Agreement policing pillar, for which the Germans accepted responsibility, had not extended itself to the provinces. So what had been going on for three and half years? The Germans, as one observer put it, "designed and built a 'Mercedes' but it could not leave Kabul. It was slow, tedious and disconnected from the other [development] processes." The German plan had no ability to mentor the police outside Kabul once they passed through the newly established police academy and deployed. When the U.S. State Department discovered what was going on in 2003, State established an emergency programme and contracted DynCorp to set up regional training centers with retired American police officers. One of these was established in Kandahar near KAF. DynCorp, however, was not contracted to assist the police in the field or backstop their non-existent logistics system – they just handled basic training.[41]

Photo Credit: Author

The RCMP members at the Provincial Reconstruction Team also worked hard to build up the local police as much as they could, using their limited resources. They were assisted by the incorruptible Colonel Hussain and his son Niaz Mohommad, who would later be grievously wounded while assisting a Canadian patrol.

In late 2004, the Rumsfeld Pentagon questioned the State Department and DynCorp on police effectiveness, but did not get the answers it wanted and insisted on a better programme. When the Canadian PRT deployed in 2005, they discovered that the Military Police platoon under CTF Bayonet had been designated a Police Training and Assistance Team and that a Mobile Training Team from Kabul periodically showed up to assist.[42] These were the first concrete steps by the American military to try recovering the policing programmes from what was increasingly viewed as a development process collectively bungled by the Germans, State and DynCorp. The lack of a development strategy for Afghanistan during the 2001-2004 period clearly played a role in this problem, but the underfunding of the German programme and its constrained approach was also at issue.

Some police had been through DynCorp's Regional Training Center, but most had not. The RCMP officers decided to focus on assessing who had done what training, where the Police Sub-Stations were, who controlled them and how they were supported. Coordination and recommendations could only be made after a picture had been established.

What emerged was not encouraging. There were ten sub-stations in the city – almost none of them would be inhabitable in winter by Canadian standards. Most of the personnel were not literate, not all had weapons, there were no communications systems and few vehicles.

The insurgents had compromised at least two of those sub-stations, one of them 'controlling' the Golden Arches area on Highway 4. It was evident that the Chief of Police for the city did not control his own department, such as it was. The RCMP estimated it would take two months to train a constable and 18 months to train a sub-station commander. There were too many outside 'players' in policing and there appeared to be little or no coordination among them. Local power brokers, who wanted to keep their private militias or use the police as a cover for their own activities, exploited this state of affairs. Effective and professional policing was, in the estimation of the RCMP, years away.[43]

As for the justice system, it appeared to be non-existent. The RCMP noticed that local mullahs played a role in dispute resolution, but there was little understanding in the PRT of how religion factored into it. The Italians, responsible for the justice pillar of the 2001 Bonn Agreement, had no representatives at the PRT or even in Kandahar. At least the policing front had an imperfect State/DynCorp structure propping it up. There was no such equivalent for the legal system.

Photo Credit: Author

Provincial Reconstruction Team patrols acted as a delivery system for the Other Government Departments, collectively called the 'OGDs'. Here a Royal Canadian Mounted Police member assesses a future site for a Police Sub-Station.

Development Programmes

The PRT was involved with an array of development activities. Broadly put, these were divided into short-term projects and long-term programmes. In general, the aphorism "give a man a fish he can eat for a day, teach a man to fish he can eat for a lifetime" corresponded to aid and capacity building respectively.

Some development projects tended to be handled by American Civil Affairs personnel from TF Gun Devils and Canadian Civil-Military Cooperation personnel from the PRT. American Special Forces also had their own Civil Affairs team but it had a different emphasis. Coordination between all three was minimal, in part because each American commander had their own Commanders Emergency Response Programme money. Canada had nothing similar until Col Bowes was able to convince DND to establish the Commanders Contingency Fund.

The national aid organizations handled both projects and programmes. There were three operating from the PRT: CIDA, USAID and the British DFID. The USAID representative, Ashley Abbott, had access to significantly more money than CIDA or DFID. DFAIT was also supposed to be involved in projects and programmes that had a demobilization and demilitarization dimension because CIDA in Ottawa did not want to be involved with anything that smacked of coercion, like policing, prisons and justice systems.

Other players in Kandahar province that were not part of the PRT included UNAMA, which had a regional office in the city; UNAMA was sometimes inactive in the province because their headquarters in Kabul periodically deemed the security threat to be too high. There were some 30 or so non-governmental aid organizations operating in Kandahar. Few had dealings with the PRT because they styled themselves as neutral entities in the war.

As we will recall, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development programmes, specifically the National Solidarity Programme with its Provincial Development Committee and the Community Development Councils, were supposed to be operating in Kandahar by 2005. They were not. In theory, a Provincial Development Committee was supposed to be in place to coordinate NSP projects. It was not. The reasons for that state of affairs related to a combination of Governor Asadullah Khalid's lack of bureaucratic capacity, his personal focus on security matters in the province and politics between Kandahar power brokers who were trying to hold on to what they had in the face of the shifting sands of influence in the province.

In addition, even if there had been a functional Provincial Development Committee, no one figured out, prior to the arrival of the PRT, exactly how the solidarity programme, development committee and community councils would interact with projects and programmes already established by the task forces with their Commanders Emergency Response Programme money, CIDA, DFAIT, DFID, USAID, UNAMA and the 30-plus uncontrollable non-governmental organizations. This situation only became apparent several months into the PRT's tour.

Consequently, Col Bowes, Glyn Berry from DFAIT and Michael Callan from CIDA set out to cajole, coerce and influence the power structure to accept the establishment of a Provincial Development Committee. This did not happen during the course of the first Canadian PRT's tenure and forced the Canadians and their allies at the PRT to develop other approaches.

Photo Credit: Author

The British Department of Foreign International Development representative, Niki Palmer, is seen working with CIMIC officer Major Sanchez King during a patrol in the remote Maruf District.

Without the Provincial Development Committee and the Community Development Councils, there would be no means to get the monies that were about to come into Kabul through the ANDS down to the province in 2006. In effect, the spout would be closed until the Kandahar power structure would accept the development committee and community council structures.

The role of the PRT became even more critical under these conditions and forced Callan, Berry, Bowes, Abbott and Mathias Tut from DFID and the other players to work closely together to develop workarounds for projects and programmes while still pushing for NSP implementation. Col Bowes established a 'PRT synchronization meeting,' which acted as a pseudo-Provincial Development Committee. Callan played a key role in conceptualizing a means to prime the NSP 'pump.' This was called Confidence in Government. The PRT representatives generally agreed that the sources of insecurity in the province included anti-government and Taliban forces that were responding to political marginalization or behaving passively in the face of the Taliban. There were disputes over land registration, grazing rights and water rights. There was youth unemployment. The rule-of-law structures were non-existent or corrupt. Then there were opportunistic criminal elements.[44]

The task forces could go after the overt anti-government forces, but the PRT was to be used to target the underlying causes of the apathy and corruption and to make contact with the Afghan people, not just their leaders. The key was the community level. The problem was that there was not enough information about the communities in the province. The PRT needed a 'map' of the justice system. It needed to know who owned what land, what was disputed and why. This would take at least three months. The police needed resources, it was clear, but the need for mentoring teams for judges, lawyers and court staff was not addressed in any systematic fashion.

Confidence in Government was designed to:[45]

1. build a trusting, enabling environment more receptive to national programmes;

2. give remote areas tangible cause to support the direction and legitimacy of the Afghan government;

3. develop direct networks between insecure communities and the provincial government; and

4. promote the utility and effectiveness and therefore legitimacy of the democratic process and its latest incarnation – the Provincial Development Committee.

The method was to provide block grants from the Provincial Development Committee (thus getting buy-in from the power brokers) to spend on locally identified priorities. Community leaders working with the Provincial Development Committee would determine these priorities. A Confidence in Government Steering Committee (i.e. a pseudo-Provincial Development Committee) would coordinate with the governor. Confidence in Government was, in an unspoken way, designed to address the fears of local power brokers that government ministries coming down from Kabul could shoulder them aside and take charge, as much as it was to address the crushing need to link the outlying and susceptible communities with Kandahar. In time, presumably, this would all act as a catalyst for greater NSP involvement. Again, it took several months to determine the state of affairs in the province, but the 'selling' of Confidence in Government was underway by November-December 2005.

Why was DFAIT even involved with a provincial-level government organization from a non-industrial nation? Even Glyn Berry, DFAIT's representative at the PRT was mystified. It appeared to some as though the NATO PRT model included a diplomat (like the German PRT in Konduz), therefore all PRTs should have a diplomat. In the Canadian case,

DFAIT personnel were to be involved in 'governance' – but diplomats, and Glyn Berry repeatedly admitted this, have no specific training in provincial or community-level governance. Diplomats exist to interact between governments. As CIDA in Ottawa did not want to have anything to do with overt security programmes, it fell to DFAIT representatives to take up that portfolio because they did not really have anything else to do except act as the Canadian civilian connection to the provincial governor.

As a result, there were a number of DFAIT international programmes administered by Glyn Berry and his assistant Erin Dorgan. One of these was the Human Security Programme, but only $200 000 was made available by DFAIT in Ottawa. In addition, DFAIT looked at spending money on the Women's shura and the Women's Legal Education Group. DFAIT representatives saw their role as backstopping Confidence in Government and mentoring the potential Provincial Development Committee.[46]

When it came to development 'heavy lifting,' however, USAID brought so many financial resources to the table that it dwarfed anything the Canadian aid organizations contemplated. In addition, USAID had been working in the country and the province since 2002, so it had continuity with the power structures, which the Canadian agencies lacked. With money came influence, and the close cooperation between Ashley Abbott and the other representatives was leveraged as much as possible in some quarters toward larger goals. Again, the issue was coordination and with no Provincial Development Committee, it was left up to personal relationships at the PRT to deconflict USAID projects and programmes with the other agencies.

The close working relationship that USAID had with the American task forces highlighted another problem that replicated itself in the Canadian context. Where did Civil Affairs or CIMIC projects stop and USAID and CIDA projects and programmes begin? CIMIC was historically designed to assist a manoeuvring force with maintaining good relations with the civilian population. In West Germany during the Cold War, Canadian CIMIC compensated German farmers when tanks destroyed fields or roads during exercises. American Civil Affairs in Vietnam was designed, in effect, to bribe locals to assist with information collection and generate temporary good will. The Americans in Afghanistan were vertically and horizontally integrated to a certain extent. If, for example, a U.S. Special Forces task force needed more aid money beyond its Commanders Emergency Response Programme funding, it could get assistance from the USAID representative who was used to dealing with projects as well as programmes. In the Canadian case, CIDA had no real experience working with the Canadian Army (at least before Kosovo and then only to a limited extent) and was institutionally inclined toward programmes, not projects.

Photo Credit: Author

This was the Panjwayi District Shura, seen here in December 2005 during discussions with USAID's Ashley Abbott who had a large check book for road construction. Panjwayi district would, in less than a year, become the focal point of Canadian Army operations until 2011.

At the PRT, CIMIC capacity was limited and as such was used in a liaison role with the other agencies. Maj Sanchez King and his staff acted as Col Bowes' 'eyes and ears' when it came to projects and programmes. In time, the CIMIC team became involved with niche areas – when others were not mandated or were unwilling to. DIAG and the ammunition disposal programmes were two of those.

Kandahar Provincial Power Politics[47]

During the course of the first Canadian PRT's tenure in Kandahar, the shadowy outlines of how relative power worked in Kandahari society started to emerge for Col Bowes and the other PRT members who were in contact with senior and second tier Afghan officials. Canadian soldiers who served in the Balkans, Middle East and Africa generally understood that there were surface cosmetics to any conflict, that everything at first looked black and white. Over time, however, experienced personnel learned that any conflict had multiple layers to it, just as the Canadians in Kabul were able to do. There were always those who profited from instability – and had no qualms about generating it as required. Others supported both sides in case one or the other won. Still others wanted revenge for past wrongs, perceived or otherwise. It was only through 'time in theatre' that these motivations and aspects emerged for the Canadians engaged in Afghanistan. The existence of the PRT in 2005 accelerated that process and allowed a first look at what was going on underneath the surface in Kandahar and southern Afghanistan.

There was little doubt that an organization called the Taliban existed, and that the Quetta Shura based in Pakistan controlled insurgent operations, but there was some debate in 2005 as to how extensive the movement was. There was equally no doubt that the Taliban had allies among other jihadist groups and was more than prepared to use violence to accomplish its objectives, whatever those were. At the same time, however, the Taliban operated against a backdrop of several groups vying for influence in Kandahar province. Collateral damage, as it were, from their activities seriously affected Canada's ability to accomplish national objectives in Kandahar over the next five years. It is crucial that the power structure be examined here so that the effects can be understood in subsequent chapters.

In 2005, the Canadian and other governments put significant research effort into studying tribal divisions and structures in southern Afghanistan. However, none of it really drilled far enough down beyond certain key personalities and what tribe they belonged to. It was generally understood that there was a rivalry between the Ghilzai and Durrani confederations of Pashtun tribes, and that some tribes supported the Taliban while others did not, but it was a basic means of understanding what was happening. This view dominated in coalition circles from 2002 to 2004 though there was debate between civilian and military intelligence professionals and among the academic anthropologists. (See Figure 9-4)

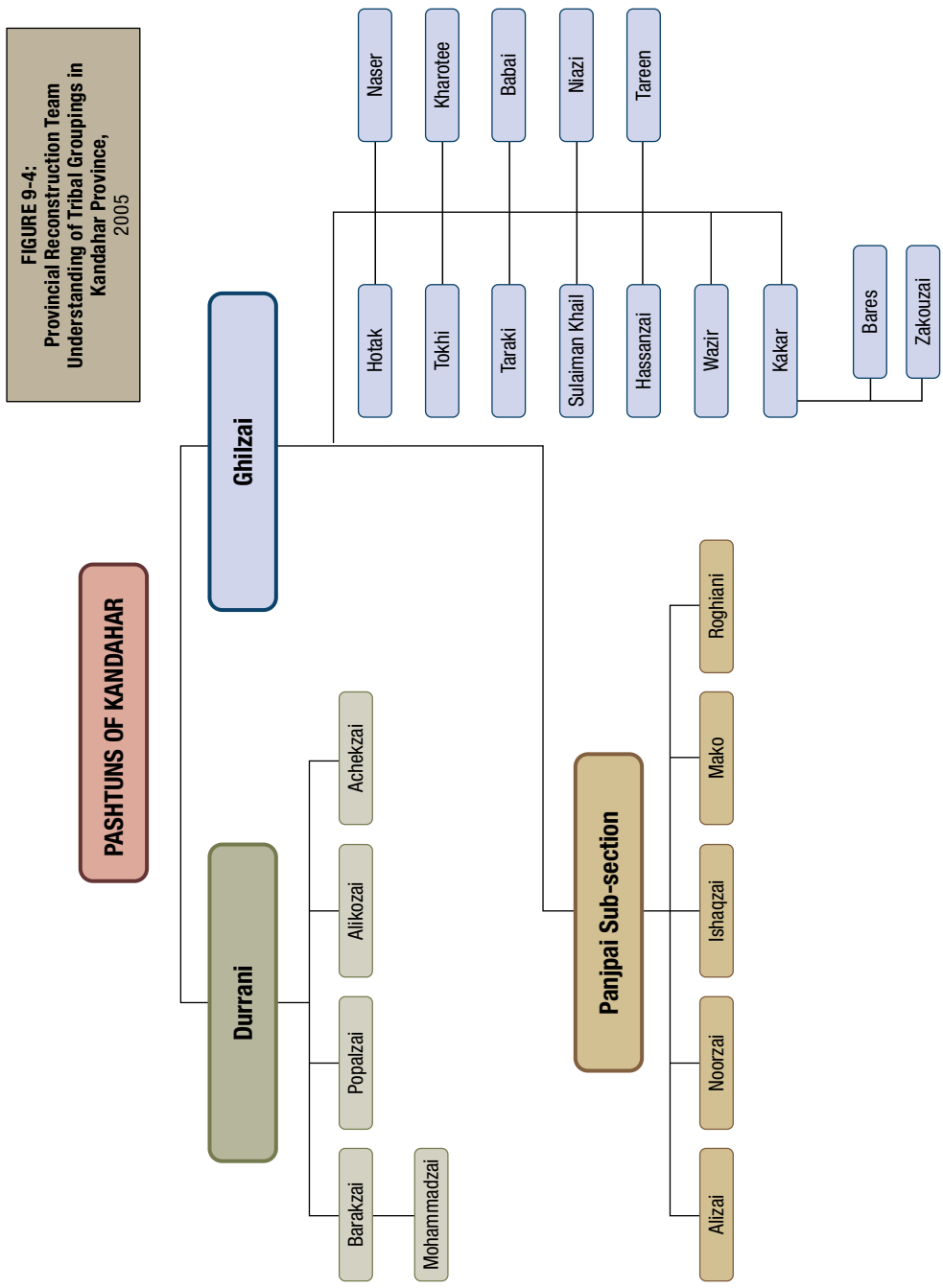


Figure 9-4: Provincial Reconstruction Team Understanding of Tribal Groupings in Kandahar Province, 2005

An overly idealistic outlook seriously hampered early Canadian attempts to analyze what was going on. In the early days, Canadian tribal rivalry analysis did not seriously examine what, exactly, the various power brokers wanted or even the detailed specifics of what their extracurricular activities were. The RCMP civilian police personnel at Camp Nathan Smith made early attempts to do so in late 2005 but this did not see widespread distribution at the time. In a general sense, it all revolved around money and influence just as it does in Canada or any other country. The difference was that there was no firm line drawn between the licit and the illicit in Kandahar. The near post-apocalyptic state of affairs in the province made the place ripe for the picking whether it was narcotics, trucking contracts, security provision, or aid distribution on behalf of non-governmental organizations or national aid agencies. Indeed, all factions were involved to some degree or another with all of these activities.

The Kandahar scene was dominated by three primary rivalries, though there were many sub-tribal rivalries that played into events. The Sherzai family, who was Barakzai, was the first to be supported by U.S. Special Operations Forces in 2002; family members were viciously anti-Taliban, having been the first to be overrun by the Taliban in the mid-1990s. Gul Agha Sherzai was governor until 2004 and he used his power to benefit his supporters during that time. President Karzai (a Popalzai) eventually displaced the Sherzais and an ostensibly neutral governor was installed in 2004. The Sherzais were in a weakened position but still had connections to protect their interests in the province. One of these was Habibullah Jan, the leader of Senjaray in Zharey district and a member of parliament. There were others behind the scenes as well but they kept a low profile and moved into areas that the Popalzais were not dominating. (See Figure 9-5)

The new governor in 2005 was Asadullah Khalid, a Ghilzai from Ghazni. However, Hamid Karzai hedged his bets and was able to manoeuvre his brother Ahmad Wali Karzai (AWK) into leading the Provincial Development Committee. The tensions between Khalid and AWK waxed and waned over the next few years, but it was clear to all who was more influential. That said, Khalid and Karzai had their own extra-curricular activities that they were able to deconflict to their mutual benefit.

Then there was Mullah Naqib, the leader of the Alikozai tribe based in Arghandab district, the 'kingmaker' of the city. The Alikozais had supported the Taliban when they took over Kandahar City from the Barakzais in 1996 and then in 2002 they changed sides and turned Kandahar City over to the Barakzai power structure. When the Popalzais removed Gul Agha Sherzai and the Barakzais in 2004, Naqib and the Alikozais supported the Popalzais. Simply put, Naqib would determine who was the more powerful and side with them. This came with some bona fides as Arghandab was a key district geographically vis-à-vis Kandahar City, and whoever controlled Arghandab increased their chances of controlling the city.

FIGURE 9-5:
Power Brokerage in Kandahar Province,
2005-2006

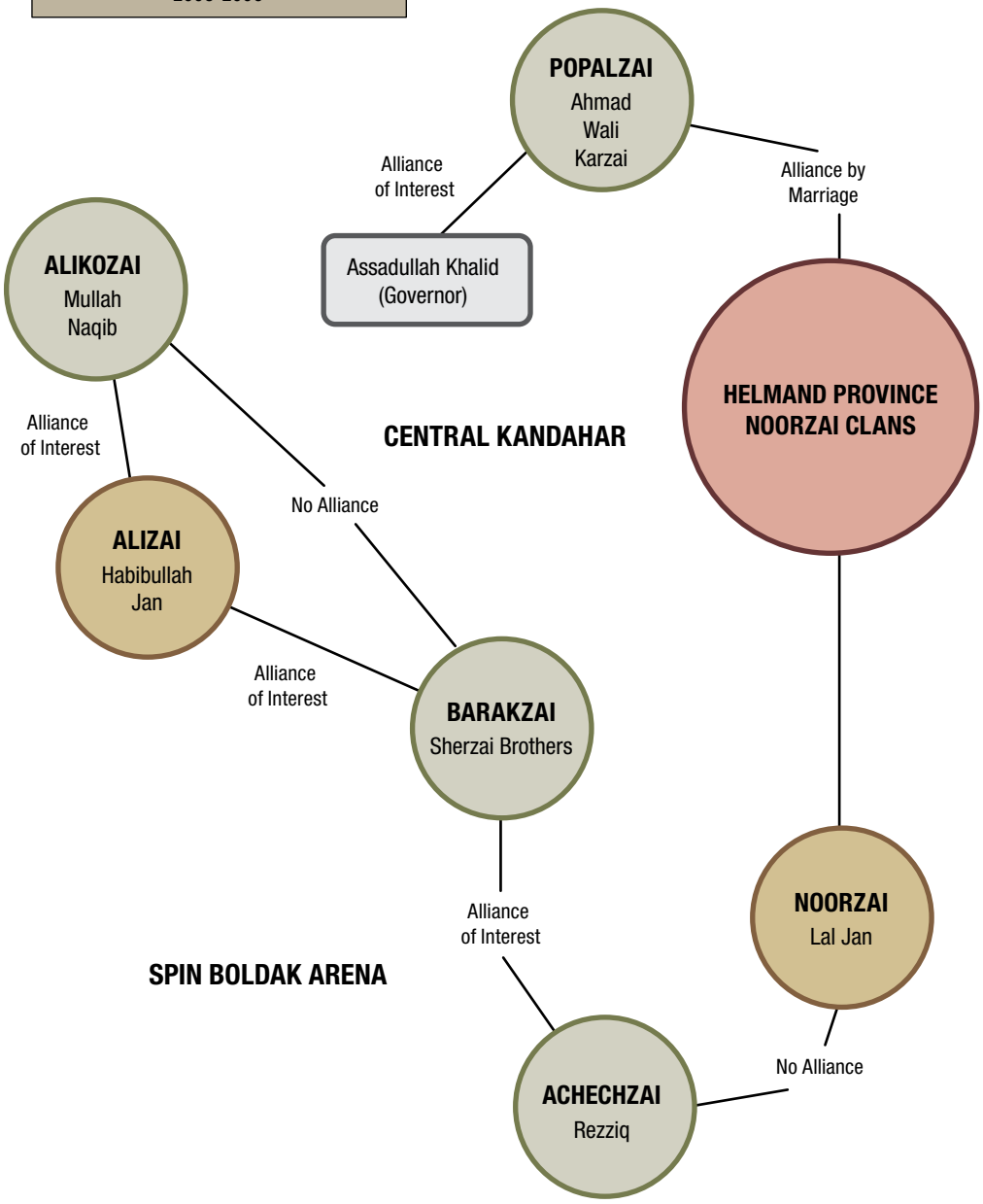


Figure 9-5: Power Brokerage in Kandahar Province, 2005-2006

Further south in Spin Boldak, there was an ongoing Noorzai-Achakzai rivalry in that vital trading town. The antagonists included Haji Lal Jan, a Noorzai, and Abdul Raziq, an Achakzai. Each had a private militia that was 'DIAG'd' into 'police.' There was a *détente* of sorts, but no one was sure how long it would last. All anyone knew then was that Raziq had connections to the Popalzai structures and everyone hated the Noorzai leadership for openly siding with the Taliban in 1994.

Naqib and the Popalzai representatives eyed each other warily, and at the same time neither would openly have any truck with the Sherzais or their surrogates. What did emerge was a status quo whereby the Barakzai power structure retained certain economic interests without harassment by the Popalzai leaders in order to keep the peace. It appeared at the time that Naqib tried to remain above the fray as much as possible. That said, however, there were always other members lower on the ladder in all three factions who caused trouble from time to time. And of course, the Barakzais wanted revenge on both the Alikozais and the Popalzais for their various betrayals in 1996 and 2004.

The main tribal issues in early to mid-2005, broken down by district, were assessed as:

- Ghorak District: Alikozais dominate, minor tribe grievances;
- Khakrez District: Alikozai stronghold with grievances against the Barakzais because of lack of development aid under Governor Gul Agha Sherzai;
- Kandahar City: Barakzais held political power until Popalzais put in by Karzai resulting in significant Barakzai-Popalzai tensions; Alikozais got the secretary-level positions in the bureaucracy;
- Panjwayi District: The Alikozais in the district upset by lack of developmental aid from the Barakzai administration;
- Shah Wali Kot: Barakzai-Popalzai tensions;
- Maywand: Noorzai and Ishaqzai stronghold; and
- Daman: Achakzais dominate, minor tribal grievances.

It is crucial to understand here that these rivalries did not exist in a vacuum separate from the Taliban and their activities. This is what was so hard for many Canadian troops, let alone the Canadian population back home, to understand and accept. From time to time, fresh, young newly deployed Canadian intelligence analysts, CIMIC, and psychological operations personnel would declare, as if it were the first time, that power broker X had Taliban connections. The fact was, all of the factions had Taliban connections, and some members were even related to senior and mid-level Taliban leaders. In some cases, they would go so far as to taunt each other on the radio during operations. This was not the Allies versus the Axis in Normandy, nor was it NATO versus the Warsaw Pact in a divided Germany. The situation was akin to those depicted in "The Sopranos" or "Deadwood" television series; the PRT slowly learned by late 2005 that Kandahar had order without law.

Provincial Reconstruction Team Operations by December 2005

It is impossible to list every long-range patrol or key interaction during the course of the six months of this PRT rotation. The important issue here is that the variety of patrol types, be they information operations, policing liaison, CIMIC, key leadership visits or district assessments all contributed to establishing what was going on at all levels of society in the province. In effect, the PRT became a social ISTAR battalion as much as it was a delivery mechanism for projects and programmes. In a culture where understanding, hospitality and long-term relationships were currency, the first PRT deployment in 2005-2006 set Canada up for success in the province.

The insurgency from September to December 2005 exhibited distinct shifts from month to month. In September, there were IEDs on Highway 1 in Zharey and on Highway 4 south of KAF. A cluster of contacts occurred in the area between Panjwayi district and southwest of Kandahar City, where TF Gun Devils identified an insurgent support 'ratline' coming in from the cells operating in Zharey district. From mid-September to mid-October, the action was clustered all along Highway 1 in Zharey district, with more and more contacts north of the city in Shah Wali Kot and Mianishin districts. The airfield was rocketed on occasion. From mid-October to mid-December, the level of activity on Highway 1 was still high, rockets continued against the airfield, and a new cluster of IEDs started on Highway 4 between the airfield and the city. When TF Gun Devils surged into the northern districts, they had running gunfights with insurgent cells on six occasions. Over in Maruf, the French special operations forces contained another cluster of cells by the end of December. There were problems in Panjwayi district: the clinic in the town of Nakhonay was burned; the school in the nearby town of Chalghowr was burned; and the school custodian in Belanday was kidnapped and hung.[48] (See Figures 9-6 to 9-8)

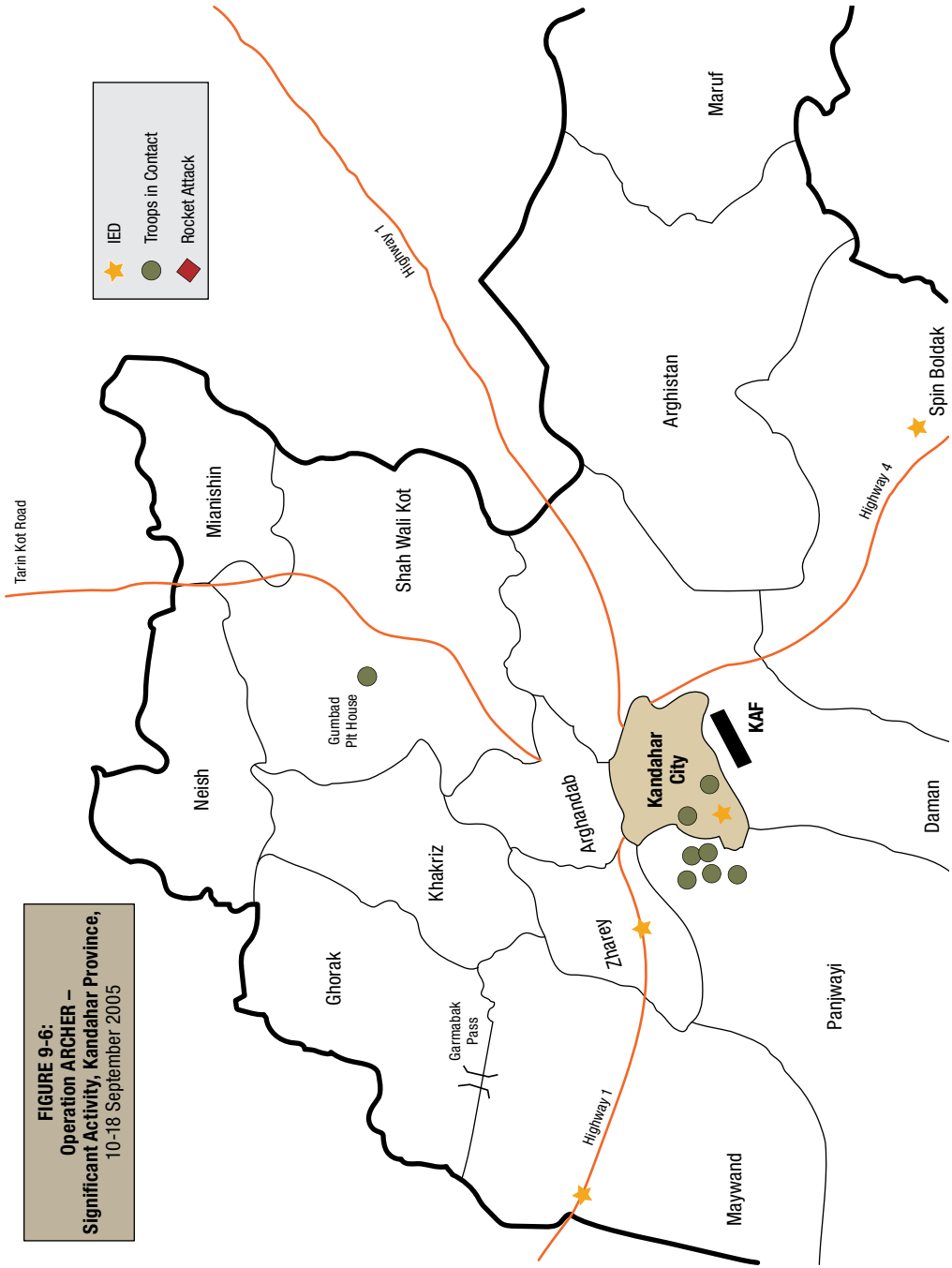


FIGURE 9-6:
Operation ARCHER –
Significant Activity, Kandahar Province,
10-18 September 2005

Figure 9-6: Operation ARCHER – Significant Activity, Kandahar Province, 10-18 September 2005

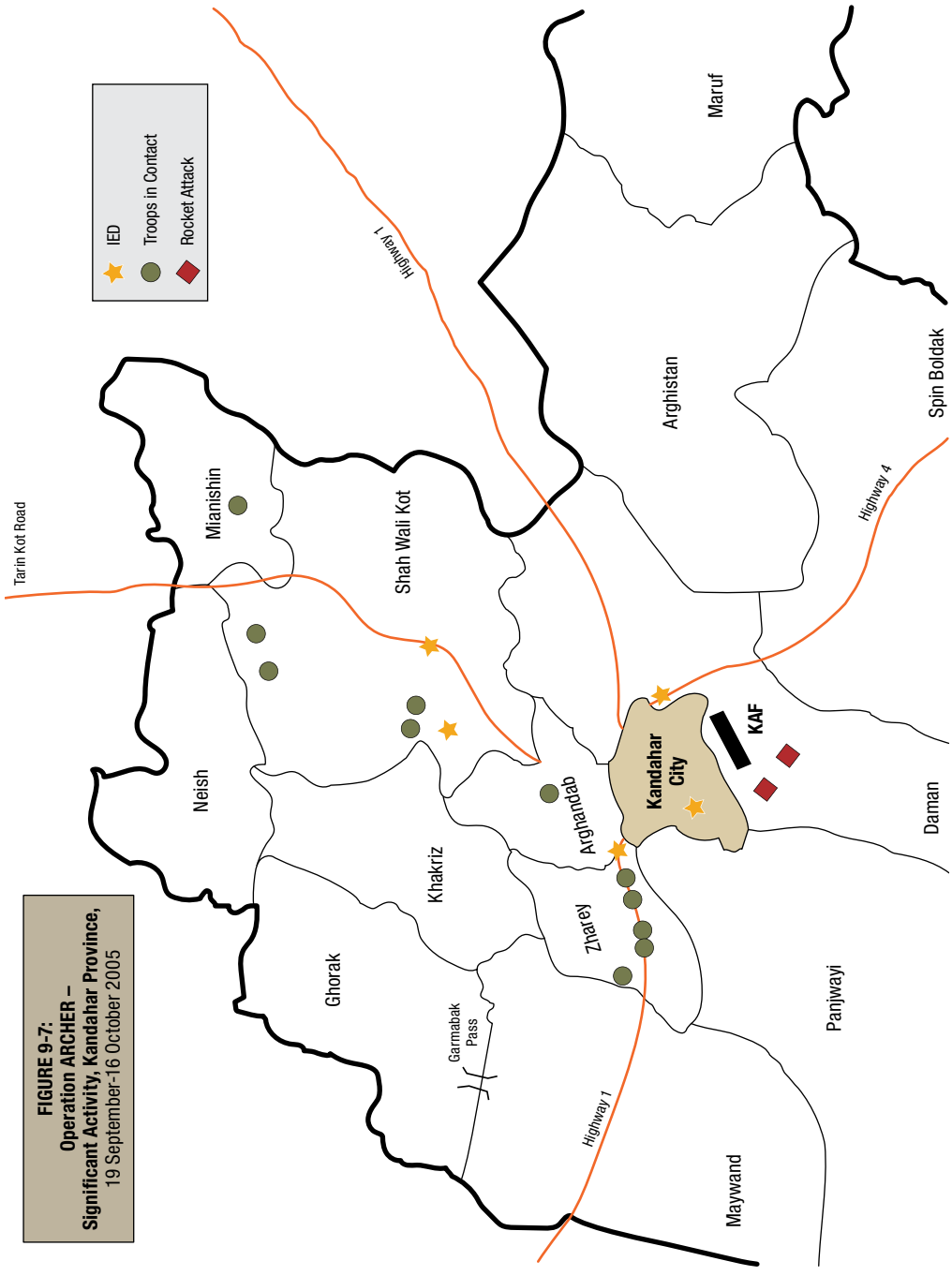


FIGURE 9-7:
Operation ARCHER –
Significant Activity, Kandahar Province,
19 September-16 October 2005

Figure 9-7: Operation ARCHER – Significant Activity, Kandahar Province, 19 September-16 October 2005

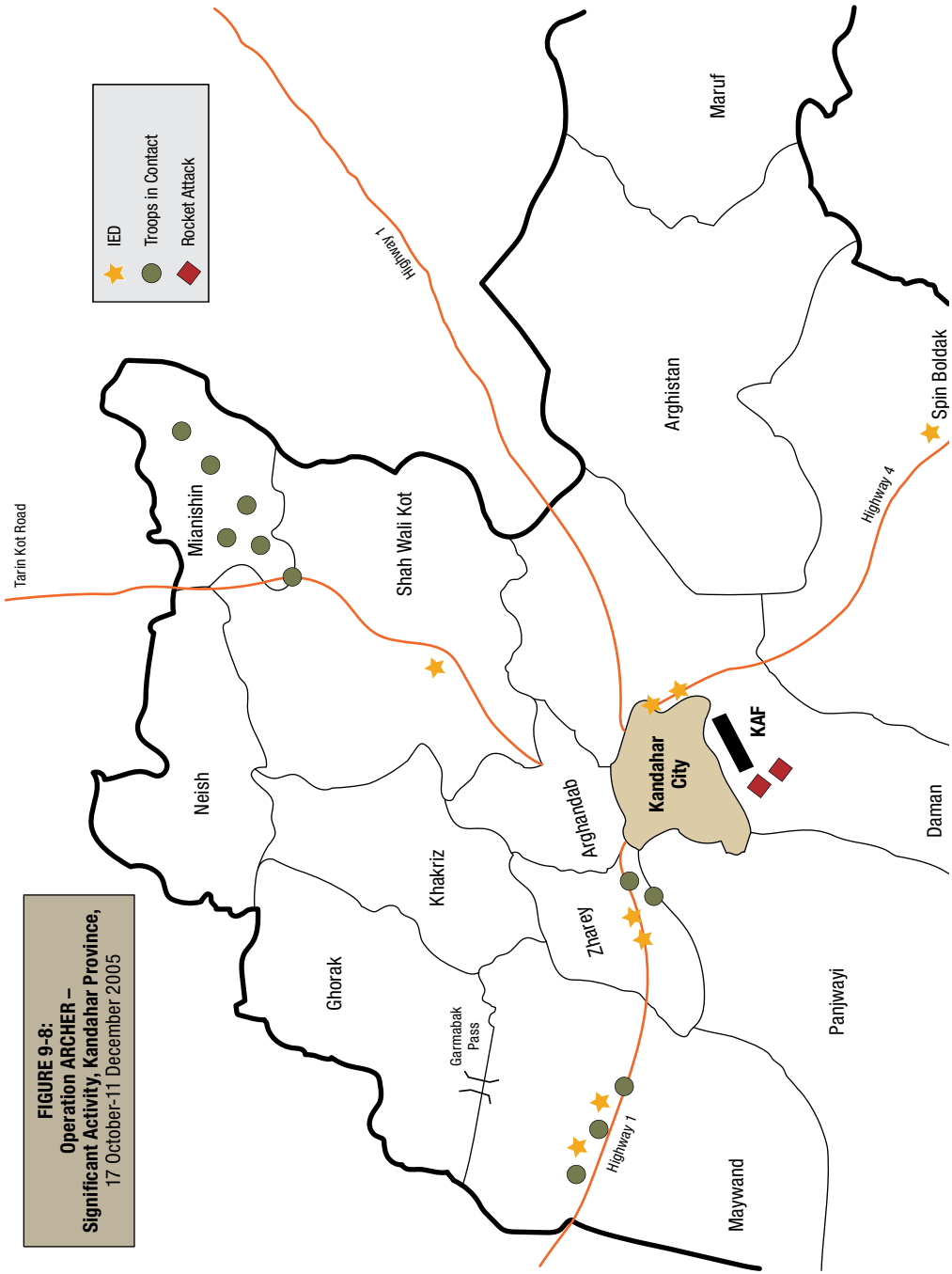


FIGURE 9-8: Operation ARCHER – Significant Activity, Kandahar Province, 17 October-11 December 2005

Figure 9-8: Operation ARCHER – Significant Activity, Kandahar Province, 17 October-11 December 2005

There were concerns at the PRT, however, that the incoming Combined Task Force Aegis and TF Orion did not understand PRT operations or what the PRT had evolved into since it arrived in summer 2005. The incoming organizations, established at the same time the PRT was deploying, had their own ideas as to what the PRT was for and were going to dramatically alter the structure and command relationships. This was viewed with some trepidation by elements in the PRT who were only just starting, after six months, to gain fragile insight into the closed world of Kandahari society and how influence worked within it. They were concerned that the newcomers would destroy this fragility and credibility would have to be rebuilt, which would further delay development in the province.[49]

What was apparent to the PRT leadership after six months was that the PRT did not have enough capacity by itself. It needed to be bigger and have more money. Indeed, Col Bowes referred to this PRT as "roto null" instead of Roto 0, which is the usual designator for a first-time deployment. It was a big recce and it only scratched the surface.

To be fair, there were so many problems with Kandahar and its people. The province was in a country that had been at war for over 20 years. The damage to infrastructure, culture, religion and demographics was considerable. Where to start? And with whom? That said, there was myopia in the Canadian approach and the seeds of future problems were sown early on. First, Ottawa bureaucrats imposed culturally insensitive priority projects and programmes on their PRT staffs, and placed unrealistic restrictions on what money could be spent and on what, or by whom. They did not understand how to buy influence and influence was critical to getting anything done in the Afghan environment. There was resentment that the PRT was run by "the military" and not a civilian department. There was a willful lack of recognition in some quarters that the PRT was a counterinsurgency unit involved in a war, that there was no neutrality and Canada had taken a side. Instead of Canadian agencies working together as Canadians toward Canadian government goals, there were people in Ottawa who appeared to be more closely aligned with non-governmental organizations and UN mentalities and objectives. After spending some time in Kandahar, the field representatives of these departments developed a view that did not, perhaps, correspond with the departmental and personal agendas in the Ottawa bureaucracy. Elements in the Ottawa bureaucracy were unwilling or unable to accept these realities.

The Glyn Berry Assassination

On 15 January 2006, a suicide bomber detonated his Toyota van next to a G Wagon transporting ambassador Glyn Berry after the patrol escorting him entered Kandahar City on its way in from KAF. Berry was killed in the blast and three soldiers seriously wounded; the explosion was so large, it blew the G Wagon across the road, peeling back the roof and opening the vehicle up like a can. MCpl Paul Franklin, a medic, worked to save the lives of his fellow soldiers even though both of his legs were injured severely enough they would have to be amputated later. Sgt Joe Brink entered the vehicle while it was on fire and worked on another wounded soldier until he could be extricated from the G Wagon. Brink was decorated with the Meritorious Service Cross for his actions.

The effects of this assassination were significant. Canadian OGD operations at the PRT were suspended and OGD personnel on leave had their leave extended indefinitely. Security measures were re-examined. Some insisted that it was a lucky "hit," that the enemy could not have known who was in the vehicle, while others disagreed.[50] Reticent bureaucrats in Ottawa, whether out of concern for the safety of their personnel or out of relief that they could use this as an excuse to extract themselves from PRT operations, refused to send civilian personnel back to Kandahar unless the Canadian Forces acquiesced to their force protection demands, which involved airlift. Unfortunately, without Canadian helicopters on the ground, this was a problematic process and involved working out a deal with the Americans and British for access to theirs. The arrangements took months to sort out and for a very critical spring 2006, non-RCMP supported projects were suspended, including the critical Confidence in Government initiative. All programme momentum slowed down and then stopped. The USAID representative and the check book that went along with her re-aligned with a U.S. Special Forces task force instead of the PRT.[51]

Col Bowes handed over the PRT to TF Orion in February 2006. The Berry killing was the start of a long, hot, dangerous year where the fate of Kandahar City would be decided. Most development was suspended while the enemy mounted an escalating attack on the city's surrounding districts. With a single suicide IED strike, the insurgents put back provincial-level development nearly a year. There would be no coordinated provincial-level development programming in Kandahar until early 2007. To put that in perspective, that was nearly six years after the Bonn Agreement and four years after the National Solidarity Program was implemented.

ENDNOTES

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5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. See: U.S. State Department, "Nature of the Threat of Terrorist Abuse and Exploitation of Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs)"; Thomas Bamforth, "Political Complexities of Humanitarian Intervention in the Pakistan Earthquake," *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance* (16 January 2007); Evan F. Kohlmann, "The Role of Islamic Charities in International Terrorist Recruitment and Financing," DIIS Working Paper No. 2006/7, Danish Institute for International Studies (2006).
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9. Interview with Col Steve Bowes (Kandahar, 21 December 2005).
10. CTF Bayonet O&I brief to the author (KAF, December 2005); interview with Col Paul Calbos (22 February 2010).
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40. Ibid.
41. Calbos interview.
42. Calbos interview.
43. KPRT O&I Briefing; author's observations (11 December 2005).
44. CIDA briefing to the author (Kandahar, December 2005).
45. Ibid.
46. PRT O&I Briefing (Kandahar, 11 December 2005).
47. This section is based on information collected through his Afghan connections during the author's multiple deployments to Kandahar from 2003 to 2011.
48. Ibid.
49. This view was expressed to the author while at the PRT (Kandahar, December 2005).
50. It is the author's hypothesis, based on eleven years of observing the Kandahar political scene and having met Glyn Berry days before he was killed and discussed details of that scene with him, that Berry was assassinated in part because of his forceful inquiries into illicit activities conducted by elements of the Kandahari power structure. This hypothesis is shared by several Canadians who worked intimately with elements of the Kandahari power structure from that period and after. At least one member of the Canadian board of inquiry into the killing dismissively (and improperly) labels any retroactive attempt to analyze the Berry assassination as 'conspiracy theory.' Although there was a board of inquiry conducted in early 2006, in my opinion its members lacked long-term experience with the political, economic and tribal environment in southern Afghanistan, experience that was crucial to comprehending the Byzantine nature of why and how such an assassination could take place. Indeed, the Board of Inquiry report is less than exhaustive and possesses a glaring lack of context that might have illuminated these factors. In my professional view, the exact sequence of events that led to Berry's death will likely never be fully known given the demise of those Afghans who were involved in it.
51. This aspect of events was noted by PRT personnel and conveyed to the author (Summer 2006).

ODYSSEY:

COMBINED TASK FORCE AEGIS AND TASK FORCE ORION, JANUARY-AUGUST 2006[1]

The decision to commit a Canadian-led brigade headquarters and a mechanized infantry battle group to southern Afghanistan was taken against the strategic and operational context of 2005. In that construct, there was a political need to facilitate NATO Stage III expansion; a practical need to assist and support the PRT with its reconstruction efforts; and a desperate need to improve Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Once CTF Aegis and TF Orion deployed in early 2006 these organizations discovered that the situation in southern Afghanistan had drastically changed while they were preparing to deploy. From February to August 2006, CTF Aegis and TF Orion were confronted with a steadily deteriorating security situation that climaxed with a series of dramatic battles west of Kandahar City. At the same time, British forces deployed into neighbouring Helmand province and walked into a metaphorical insurgent buzz-saw. On numerous occasions, Canadian forces were re-deployed from Kandahar province to prop up the British position while insurgent efforts in Kandahar developed a dangerous momentum. The fight for the south was on as the insurgents demonstrated that the coalition's and the government's position was much more precarious than it had generally been believed.

What few realized in 2005 was how much the Taliban and its allies had been able to recuperate in Pakistan and then ambitiously proceeded with their project. The nature and scope of this new threat only became evident to the coalitions through CTF Aegis and TF Orion's activities during the first half of 2006. In effect, the enemy wanted to generate a crisis in and around Kandahar City and then exploit the situation in order to gain popular support with the objective of seizing the city, if the conditions were right. That would presumably lead to a collapse of the government position in the southern half of the country and pave the way for the return of the Taliban and Al Qaeda, who would exploit the coalition failure for their purposes globally. In essence, an Operation ENDURING FREEDOM or ISAF defeat in and around Kandahar had potential strategic effects.

Combined Task Force Aegis and Task Force Orion

CTF Aegis, led by BGen David Fraser, was unlike any other Canadian headquarters deployed in the past 50 years. Although it was technically a brigade-sized headquarters, CTF Aegis had functions, a span of control, and an area of operations much larger than a brigade headquarters from the Second World War did. CTF Aegis was responsible for Regional Command (South), that is, the entirety of southern Afghanistan. (See Figure 10-1)

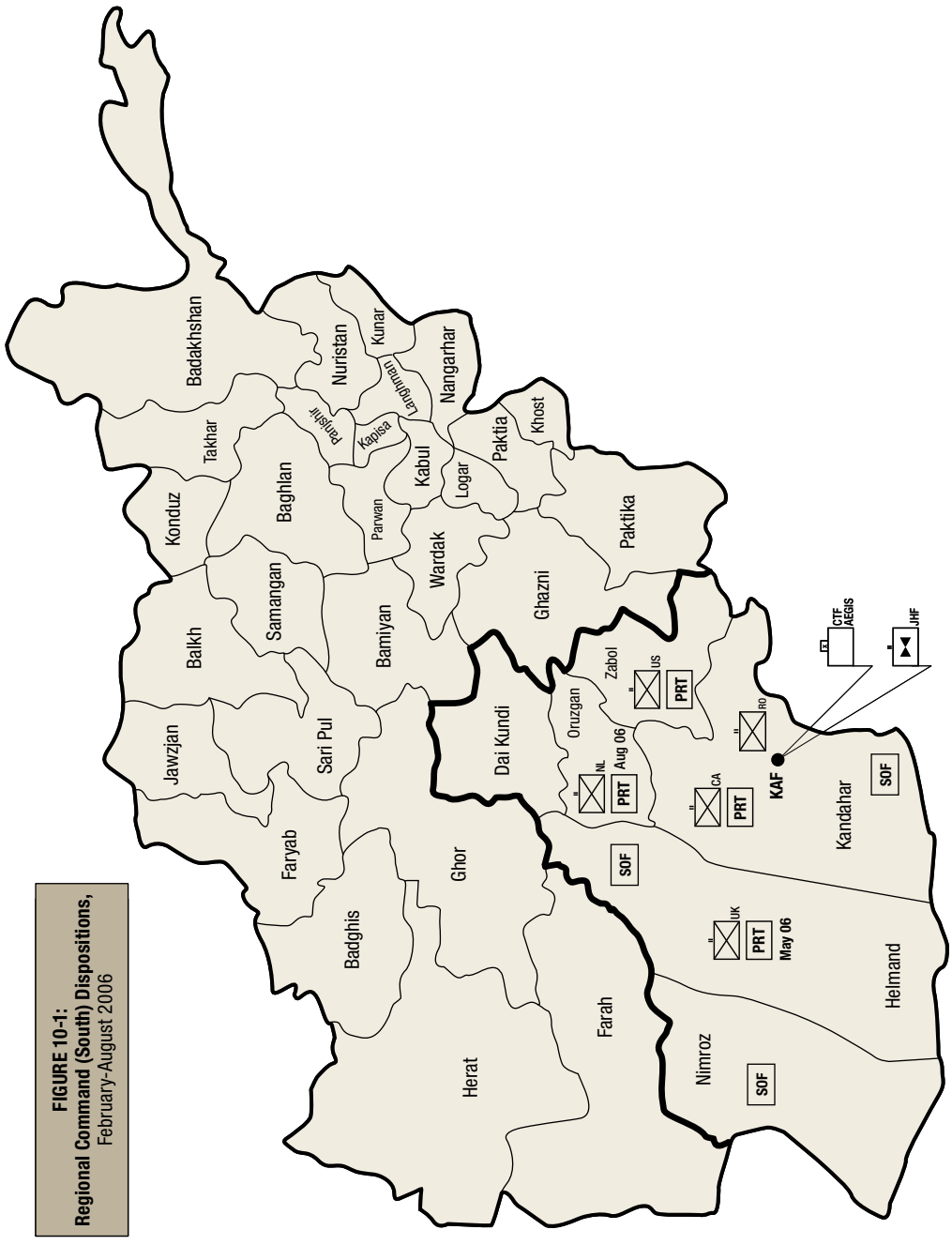


Figure 10-1: Regional Command (South) Dispositions, February-August 2006

There were, ultimately, five national battle groups: Canadian, British, American, Dutch and Romanian; and four PRTs: Canadian, British, American and Dutch. In February 2006, however, only the American, Romanian and Canadian battle groups, and the Kandahar and Zabul PRTs were in place. Coalition SOF were working to prepare the way in Helmand and Oruzgan provinces, while Nimruz and Daikundi provinces were "economy of force" areas that had no coalition presence. CTF Aegis reported to CJTF-76, the American divisional-sized headquarters located at Bagram Air Base and based on the 10th Mountain Division divisional headquarters. CJTF-76, which reported to CFC-A which in turn reported to U.S. CENTCOM. Canada maintained liaison and staff officers in all of these headquarters to provide situational awareness and to protect Canadian interests.

CTF Aegis had the usual staff sections (personnel, intelligence, operations and logistics) but these were augmented with new ones. There was a Joint Operations Centre to handle the entire region. Aegis had an expanded and augmented planning system with a J3, J5 and J3/5, each designed to handle planning out to several days, weeks and months. There was an organization designed to coordinate PSYOPS, Public Affairs and other influence activities, and another to liaise with the plethora of organizations mentoring the emergent ANSF, which included NATO Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams, American ETTs, Civilian Police contingents from the PRTs, and contract police trainers from DynCorp. Aegis also included a Development Advisor, Christina Green – she worked with the PRTs, the CIMIC branch, and the Afghan authorities who were responsible to coordinate and deconflict development and reconstruction. The Political Advisor, Pam Isfeld, worked on governance and diplomacy aspects of the mission. The bulk of the headquarters was Canadian, but personnel from other NATO nations, including the Danes and non-NATO allies like the Australians, made significant contributions too.

Most importantly, CTF Aegis was a coalition focal point for what were euphemistically called "enablers" – national intelligence collection systems that ranged from signals intelligence and electronic warfare systems to unmanned and manned aerial vehicles. Information from these systems was "washed" or parceled out to Aegis from the nations through their liaison staffs and, from there, integrated as required into planning and warning. For the most part, this meant plugging into the vast multi-billion dollar American global intelligence collection and analysis apparatus.[2]

CTF Aegis boasted joint fires and joint effects organizations designed to coordinate lethal and non-lethal support to operations. All forms of fire support from artillery, mortars and aviation to close air support were coordinated through CTF Aegis and in some cases pooled for use throughout the area of operations. For example, a Canadian M-777 gun detachment might be located in British-commanded Helmand province firing on targets provided by an American task force.

As for aviation support, there was supposed to be a pool of helicopters (American, British, Australian and ex-Canadian Dutch CH-47 Chinooks) that CTF Aegis units could draw on, coordinated by Aegis. For the most part, though, national task forces had to put in bids to use any of these systems and priority usually went to the owners. This highlighted, on a daily basis, the severe Canadian deficiency in rotary-wing air support and made Canada, as it had in Kabul, dependent on other nations in this area. There were long-term ramifications for this state of affairs.

Another deficiency was CTF Aegis's inability to effectively coordinate with the variety of special operations organizations operating in the Regional Command (South) battle space. For the most part, this applied to the higher-tier SOF leadership hunters but also, to a certain extent, the Tier II Special Operations Task Force (SOTF) operating in Regional Command (South) as well. CTF Aegis did develop a cordial relationship with TF 31, an American task force, and TF 42, the British SOF task force. This latter relationship was leveraged to great effect during counter-terrorism operations in Kandahar City. CTF Aegis had virtually no relationship to Canadian SOF activities. On at least two occasions, however, SOF organizations conducted operations in the Aegis battle space in an uncoordinated fashion, which resulted in both civilian casualties and casualties to the SOF. This was the inauspicious start of what would ultimately become a valuable, mutually profitable, conventional SOF relationship in the years to come.[3]

TF Orion, led by LCol Ian Hope, was a battle group based on 1st Battalion, PPCLI. It was under the command of CTF Aegis. Structurally, it had three infantry companies: A and C Companies, led by Maj Kirk Gallinger and Maj Bill Fletcher respectively, both equipped with LAV III, came from 1 PPCLI, but B Company from 2 PPCLI, led by Maj Nick Grimshaw, was equipped with a mix of G Wagon, RG-31 and LAV III. The artillery battery of four M-777 guns came from A Battery 1 RCHA and was commanded by Maj Steve Gallagher, while Maj Trevor Webb led 11 Field Squadron from 1 Combat Engineer Regiment. Capt Bryan Flemming from 12 RBC was in charge of a troop of Coyote reconnaissance vehicles. TF Orion was unique from other battle groups in that the decision was made to place the Kandahar PRT under its command. This made for awkward command and control relationships, and it was eventually abandoned by August 2006, but the idea was to have B Company, which was equipped on lighter scales, act as the force protection company for the PRT and its OGDs. Parallel to the CTF Aegis Joint Operations Centre, TF Orion maintained a Tactical Operations Centre at its plywood compound at KAF for provincial-level operations.[4]

The NCE for southern Afghanistan operations was commanded by Col Tom Putt. In effect, the NCE was also TF Afghanistan and commanded a signals squadron (unofficially called TF Mercury), an electronic warfare troop from 2 (EW) Squadron, the All-Source Intelligence Centre, and the NSE led by LCol John Conrad, which will be described in detail later on.

These were not coalition organizations and remained under Canadian command. Even though CTF Aegis was Canadian-commanded, it did not automatically control all Canadian organizations in Afghanistan even though BGen Fraser was double-hatted as both Commander TF Afghanistan and Commander CTF Aegis.

The Combined Task Force Aegis Campaign Plan and Concept of Operations

Having just come out of a frustrating coalition environment in Kabul, and having had experience in Bosnia with Stabilization Force as a multinational division commander with NATO, General Rick Hillier was adamant that Fraser's headquarters produce a framework document. First, he wanted to avoid "roto-itis," whereby every incoming commander and staff created their own plan driven by personality factors; it was possible that the coalition would be in place in the south for 10 years and thus continuity was crucial. The second was that there was a need to have interface between the American system and this small coalition system as it was less 'authoritarian' and more 'democratic.' That reflected the political sensitivities of getting the British and the Dutch to join the coalition down south.[5]

Fraser also had significant experience with coalition environments as a deputy to a French commander in UN Protection Force in 1994-1995, as a battle group commander in Bosnia in 1997, a planner for Operation KINETIC in Kosovo, and with the United States Northern Command. It was crucial, from his perspective, to ensure that the Canadian national objectives were ensconced in any larger plan early on and that they had coalition members 'buy in.' Generating Canadian strategic objectives was compounded at the time by a completely chaotic planning situation in Canada. At this time, the DCDS was drawing down its international command and control mandate and transferring it to the new CEFCOM, which was in the process of standing up. As a result, Hillier's direction to Fraser was, literally, "Dave, build me a nation."[6]

In the case of CTF Aegis, it reported to an American division with its plan, which in turn was operating under an American corps headquarters with its own plan. There was going to be a transition from Operation ENDURING FREEDOM to NATO ISAF during Aegis's tenure. That organization had its own plans as well. Then there were the Canadian OGDs: where did they fit in? Fraser put Maj Steve Carr to work in August 2005. The objective was to have a coherent document that had 'buy in' from all of the players. At the same time, Fraser solicited input from the Canadian OGDs in Ottawa, and from the British, Dutch and Americans. The draft was adjusted as required. This process continued right up until February 2006 when CTF Aegis deployed to KAF.[7]

Taking into account the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and the campaign planning underway in CFC-A and CJTF-76, Aegis planners considered the British campaign directives and the NATO ISAF Operation Plans. They specifically noted that

> The lead nation concept that was adopted for Security Sector Reform (SSR) at the Bonn II Conference has not produced anticipated results. It has suffered from a lack of resources, strategy, and a sense of urgency. Coordination between lead nations has been minimal….the training of the Afghan National Police has suffered from under-resourcing and the lack of a comprehensive, integrated plan. These limitations, when combined with insufficient progress in judicial reform, make the establishment of the rule of law undeliverable in the immediate term.[8]

This made Afghanistan, particularly the south, vulnerable to "violent political jockeying." A vulnerable border coupled with the Afghan drug trade "may jeopardize efforts on all fronts to build a stable national government" and leave the country vulnerable to terrorists and "the remaining Taliban elements." Canadian strategic goals remained the same as they had all along since 2001: contribute to international security; provide political, economic and military support pending the re-establishment of permanent government institutions; assist the Government of Afghanistan with maintaining security; assist with establishing a democratically elected and responsible government; and assist with reconstruction. The overall NATO and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM end-state was to have the Afghans controlling their own territory with their own security forces "led by a representative government formed through the political participation of the Afghan people."[9]

The Aegis campaign plan saw opposition to these objectives coming from three angles: the Taliban, HiG, and Al Qaeda – as they "will continue their quest to oust coalition forces." Planners believed that "unrelated and non-politicized warlords and drug networks will continue to assert themselves against the newly elected government." Notably, "All three groups will not necessarily work together but will work to disrupt the development of democracy…and impeded the completion of the SSR program."[10]

The Taliban's objectives, according to the plan, were the "establishment of a conservative Islamic state." The Taliban was seen to be supported by border communities and by international donors, though the authors of the CTF Aegis plan probably were not permitted to get into the details of Pakistani support for the movement in the planning language itself. Al Qaeda's objectives related to promoting jihad and opposing "Western influence and presence in Islamic areas." In that regard, the insurgent groups would conduct

> focused attacks against Government of Afghanistan institutions, coalition and international organizations/non-governmental organizations targets in order to remove their influence from Afghanistan; and destabilize and disrupt the Government of Afghanistan's ability to expand reach and authority. The end-state saw insurgent groups in a position to take over Afghanistan after the coalition has exited, and again, allow Al Qaeda to achieve sanctuary and use Afghanistan as a base for global terrorist operations.[11]

That meant the enemy wanted to "re-establish theocratic control in Afghanistan," and "re-install Taliban leadership under Mullah Omar and re-establish their Islamic Emirate." CTF Aegis's mission statement was, therefore, to "conduct full-spectrum operations in order to enable Government of Afghanistan efforts to defeat the adversary forces and create a secure, democratic, and self-sustaining Afghan nation-state."[12]

How was the coalition going to do that? A critical aspect was the need to bring ISAF and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM together, that is, Stage III expansion. CTF Aegis was going to be the bridge for this move in that the headquarters would start off as an Operation ENDURING FREEDOM organization and transition to a NATO one in July-August 2006. Aegis looked at the entirety of the Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and ISAF efforts, situated them within the context of the ANDS that was being mentored by the Strategic Advisory Team in Kabul and came up with a fusion of effort.

The CTF Aegis campaign plan, like the ANDS, resembled the NATO Stabilization Force's Multi-Year Road Map. There were three lines of operations: Governance and Justice; Security and Stability; and Development. CTF Aegis forces would stabilize and transition to the Afghan security forces, while non-military engagement through OGDs, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations would build the development and governance structures synergistically with the coalition security forces – not independently from them.

The specific desired effects on each line of operation broke down like this:[13]

1. Governance and Justice:

    a. the provincial governments provide and improve the delivery of basic services, and develop and provide a credible civil administration;

    b. a judicial system is operating including jails, and the rule of law is implemented across Regional Command (South); and

    c. the people of Regional Command (South) accept the authority of provincial leadership and the Governors are capable of conducting and coordinating affairs with minimal international community assistance.

2. Security and Stability:

    a. the Afghan National Army, specifically 205 Corps is capable of coordinating and conducting sustained military operations with minimal coalition/ISAF support;

b. the Afghan National Police is a credible organization, enforcing the rule of law;

c. the Afghan security forces have implemented an integrated border security plan;

d. insurgent and terrorist networks operating within Regional Command (South) are isolated and denied support base; and

e. warlords and illegally armed groups are reintegrated or marginalized.

3. Development:

a. civil authorities direct provincial reconstruction in accordance with the priorities of the Government of Afghanistan;

b. local economy has sustained growth; and

c. use of arable land in Regional Command (South) is increased, supporting an agrarian economy.

CTF Aegis established key operational tasks common across its forces to accomplish these objectives. The first one was to partner with the Afghan National Army and police to conduct joint planning and execution of operations. Those operations were to be intelligence-cued, designed to interdict infiltration of Afghanistan, and to deny the insurgents sanctuary in southern Afghanistan. Information operations would support these efforts "to positively influence and gain the support of" the population. The maintenance of "dialogue with provincial leaders, civic authorities and tribal leaders," supporting the Provincial Coordination Centre (an entity established for the 2005 provincial elections but continued by the Gun Devils and then TF Orion) and the amnesty mechanism Program Takhim-e Sohl (PTS) were also deemed critical tasks. For the PRTs, the key task was to "facilitate the development of the Afghan architecture of governance" and the "delivery of development projects and programs."[14]

In terms of time, Aegis planners envisioned relief in place with CTF Bayonet in February-March 2006, followed by 'Full Spectrum Operations' from March to July involving interdiction operations across the northern mountainous parts of Helmand, Kandahar and Zabul provinces, coupled with PRT operations south of these interdiction areas. Concurrently, the plan saw frontier interdiction operations around Spin Boldak in Kandahar and the southern border of Helmand province. In June-July, Aegis thought that it could move into the northern

areas and use intelligence-cued operations to track down and destroy the networks operating there. The enemy would be disrupted some distance away from Kandahar City and Highway 1 while Stage III expansion went into effect in July-October. Following the transition in October, there would be "an indeterminate number of rotations. Over time, the successful development of Government of Afghanistan capacities will result in measures and deliberate transfer of security and stability responsibilities." Moreover, in time, "progress in socio-economic development will create a sound basis for a self-sufficient, sustainable Afghan state."[15] The American commanders Lt Gen Karl Eikenberry in Kabul and Maj Gen Ben Freakley at Bagram signed off on the CTF Aegis Campaign Plan and the staffs initiated preparations to deconflict the plan and the 'Mountain'-series of operations that were about to commence throughout the country.[16]

Supporting Combined Task Force Aegis and Task Force Orion

Logistics support for Canadian forces in southern Afghanistan during the first half of 2006 was hampered and severely strained by the decision to "template" the ISAF Kabul model NSE onto Kandahar. This meant taking the logistics company (that is, administration company) manpower positions that were integral to the infantry battalion and giving them to a greatly reduced logistics battalion, then augmenting with the Canadian Forces Contractor Augmentation Program. The Kandahar NSE was capped at 300 military personnel and no contractors in 2006, and the addition of contractors in the NSE was not entertained on the first rotation. LCol John Conrad had to figure out the optimal proportion between transportation, supply and repair functions.[17]

As with previous rotations, an artificially imposed manpower cap caused serious problems. Kandahar was not Kabul. LCol Conrad noted that "it called for a fundamentally different logistics concept. The Kabul NSE operated mainly on the notion of a hub and spoke. The supported units drew on support from a static logistics base. The Kandahar NSE had to be protectable as a matter of routine sustainment for TF Orion."[18] It defied belief to suggest that an NSE, optimized for the urban environment of west Kabul (an area of operation of about 400 square kilometres) and supporting two major sites, could be employed in a province the size of Kandahar (225 000 square kilometres by comparison) to support four sites outside the airhead over broken terrain during protracted mobile operations ranging to Helmand province and back. Let alone the fact that the entire logistics system was under frequent attack from rockets at KAF to IEDs against convoys and ambushes against mobile recovery teams. Vehicle maintenance alone demanded upgraded capacity – especially when LAV III tires and axles were severely tested by the rocky ground and unpaved roads, wadis and tracks of the rural districts.

A similar situation existed on the ammunition front. In Kabul stabilization operations, there was almost no ammunition used except for range work to maintain skills. When TF Orion mounted combat operations in spring and summer 2006, the logistics system was not prepared for the rate of ammo used by the task force. Personnel were needed to move, store and maintain ammo stocks. Those personnel numbers were appropriate for Kabul (or Bosnia, or Kosovo….) but were not for the Kandahar environment where ammunition expenditure was necessary, not exceptional.[19]

Then there was the dispersed nature of TF Orion operations. At the start of the operation, TF Orion operated the Gumbad Platoon House in Shah Wali Kot district, and later FOB Martello. These facilities lay 100 kilometres north of Kandahar City. Then there was Camp Nathan Smith, where the PRT was located. FOB Wilson, later Patrol Base Wilson, was 25 kilometres west of the city. And, in time, TF Orion became responsible for a forward operating base down in Spin Boldak, 85 kilometres southeast of KAF. Resupplying these sites, which had to be done by ground convoys called Combat Logistics Patrols (CLP or 'clips') because there were no Canadian logistics helicopters, meant that there was increased wear and tear on the barely armoured 16-tonne Heavy Logistics Vehicle Wheeled Steyr trucks that the NSE employed. Fuel consumption dramatically increased for the force. This meant more fuel storage and more people to handle fuel, and so on.

Photo Credit: Author

The National Support Element relied on contracted Afghan trucking to handle logistics tasks that did not involve critical equipment or heavy protection. 'Jingle Trucks' like this one were in constant use supporting Canadian operations in Kandahar province during the course of the war.

In effect, the NSE was caught in an escalating spiral of requirements that it was not structured to sustain. LCol John Conrad and his people were pushed to the absolute physical and moral limits on all fronts, particularly after TF Orion was forced to deploy and operate in Helmand province on several occasions. This involved the creation of ad hoc supply and maintenance columns not unlike those used in the Western Desert in the Second World War. Such an activity could not be handled by CANCAP contractors, for example, so the personnel savings that were made in Kabul were unrealized in Kandahar. The logistics operation was closely integrated with TF ORION operations down to section-level fighting that made the use of contractors off KAF itself impossible.

Resupply operations were in some cases as hazardous as the engagements that the infantry companies got into. Vulnerable because of their slow speeds, large ponderous vehicles and limited protection, the NSE combat logistics patrol crews and mobile recovery teams fought on a front all of their own, in mobile columns and dispersed at forward operating bases throughout the province. Fortunately, LCol Conrad and the NSE staff had absorbed American lessons learned from Iraq, particularly the disastrous 507th Maintenance Company ambush in 2003, and prepared their soldiers for a similar environment. The NSE had its own infantry platoon for force protection, and all of its logisticians were capable of using the issued array of Canadian small arms and crew-served weapons.

A premium was also placed on vehicle recovery. On the surface, it would not be acceptable to leave a multi-million dollar fighting vehicle on the field of battle strictly out of cost considerations; such an act would be a public relations disaster. But this is where recovery during 21st century operations in Afghanistan differed from the Second World War. The enemy could use destroyed vehicles for information operations and they could also be exploited by their technical specialists to build better IEDs. Pictures of burnt-out LAV IIIs, for example, could readily be placed on the Internet as part of the insurgent's propaganda effort. On at least one occasion the personal effects of a crew that abandoned a vehicle were used by the enemy for PSYOPS purposes. In addition, Canadian armoured vehicles engaging in combat was a novelty to the Canadian media. It was possible that ill-informed or unaware media would use photos of destroyed vehicles and exaggerate the depth of the loss of a single vehicle. As a result, robust measures were taken to recover Canadian vehicles.

The NSE structure for 2006 also included a Camp Services Platoon to handle KAF-based administration. Transportation Platoon, with its up-armoured 16-tonne trucks, fuel bowsers and Bison armoured carriers, consisted of a mere 56 soldiers. Supply Platoon had 36 soldiers to support the entire contingent that ran on 40 000 different line items of equipment. Maintenance Platoon, with its Arnes trailers and Bison mobile repair teams and Heavy Logistics Vehicle Wheeled wreckers, was split into deployable mobile repair

teams and a heavy repair organization at KAF: it was augmented from time to time with personnel deemed to be on "Technical Assistance Visits" to get around the manpower cap. There was also an infantry platoon made up of personnel from several reserve regiments to provide convoy security. All in all, the NSE had 281 personnel. As LCol John Conrad noted:

> With the small size of my unit, I had no comfort zone, no fat anywhere on the bone to meet an emergency, much less cater to soldiers being on leave in Canada….In the size of the unit we were mounting, there would be no redundancy, no excess capacity.[20]

Signals support for the Canadian effort was beset with some structural challenges. During the Cold War, a brigade headquarters had a Signals Squadron and was geared towards mobile warfare. In Afghanistan, CTF Aegis had a fixed headquarters, support infrastructure and mobile forces. CTF Aegis also had to be able to communicate with Canada on the other side of the world. In addition, there were the Mobile Electronic Warfare Teams from 2 (EW) Squadron. Brigade Signals Squadrons were not doctrinally set up for or equipped to handle all four activities. All of the signals organizations and personnel in Kandahar were styled 'TF Mercury' at the NCE, but in reality 65 signals personnel were part of TF Orion and CTF Aegis, and the Mobile Electronic Warfare Team worked for the All Source Intelligence Centre. The strategic communication system detachments were located at KAF and in Camp Mirage, but it was unclear whether they reported to the Canadian Forces Joint Signal Regiment in Kingston, or to the NCE or both. There was notable lack of centralization of the signals effort in Afghanistan, which curtailed any long-range planning and forced a significant amount of improvisation.[21]

On the medical front, Canada accepted command of a multinational Role 3 hospital in February 2006. The existing "temporary" plywood structure next to the KAF runway that served as "Charlie Med" under CTF Bayonet and its predecessors for several years was augmented with several Weatherhaven shelters to become the Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit (Role 3 MMU). Commanded by Col Jacques Richard, the Role 3 MMU consisted of doctors, nurses, med techs, mental health specialists, physiotherapists and all manner of health care professionals from the main troop contributor nations in Regional Command (South). There were additional unit medical stations for Canadian units that were separate from the Role 3 MMU. Bison ambulances and medic teams were attached to TF Orion sub-units on a rotation basis. U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force helicopters once again handled medical evacuation from the field, as Canada was unable to provide those resources.

Intelligence support for Canadian operations in the early days of the Kandahar operations was somewhat problematic as the All Source Intelligence Centre at KAF and its relationship with the deployed units and formations was different from the one in Kabul. The synergy

between the All Source Intelligence Centre, the ISTAR Company, and KMNB in Kabul in 2003-2005 simply did not exist in Kandahar. CTF Aegis, for example, was not comparable to KMNB by any stretch of the imagination. There was no ISTAR Company – and that construct would not have worked in the geographically dispersed operations that TF Orion was conducting. Political factions in a singular urban environment were by no means analogous to complex tribal dynamics in several provinces. The All Source Intelligence Centre at KAF, commanded by Maj Mark Godefroy, arrived on the ground not structured to collect on and analyze the political dynamics of Kandahar province or the relationship between those dynamics and the insurgency. Understanding those important processes was left up to the PRT with its pair of intelligence personnel, who had no training in political analysis or tribal dynamics. The ASIC tended to be "red icon" driven, that is, focused on insurgent fighting units and not necessarily the political and social effects those units were generating on the population and the government.

Photo Credit: Author

Canada took the lead at the Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit at Kandahar Air Field in 2006 when Combined Task Force Aegis assumed command of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM forces in southern Afghanistan. The Role 3 MMU remained under Canadian command until 2010 and saved the lives of countless military and civilian casualties.

Indeed, many believed that the All Source Intelligence Centre was supporting Ottawa more than they did TF Orion. Yes, there were Mobile Electronic Warfare Teams from 2 (EW) Squadron with their associated specialist personnel operating alongside TF Orion and they were able to provide up-to-the-second data – but it was the slow process by which data were analyzed at the ASIC then disseminated to TF Orion that caused problems.

LCol Hope was not confident that ASIC could react in a timely fashion to his requirements, nor was BGen Fraser. As a result, both commanders tended toward informal measures to gain the information they needed to supplement the slower ASIC processes. In Fraser's case, he learned that the Joint Coordination Centre, an entity established back in 2005 to coordinate Afghan police, Afghan National Army, and coalition operations for the elections, was still operating. Originally located at the UN compound, TF Orion moved it to the Governor's Palace. Maj Harjit Sajjan, a reserve armoured officer with police experience, was assigned there; he subsequently tapped into a significant amount of information relating to Kandahar's power structure and the insurgency. This information provided insight into some of the areas the ASIC did not get into. Similarly, LCol Hope developed strong relationships with certain police leaders. These leaders operated their own HUMINT networks, which TF Orion was able to access. The S-2 shop at TF ORION and the S-2 shop at CTF AEGIS, with its access to American sources, tended to use information from a variety of sources and not just products provided by the ASIC.[22]

The NSE and the ASIC both suffered from the same thing. Staff in Canada templated the Kabul experience onto the Kandahar environment under pressure from an artificial manpower cap and tried to make a square peg fit into a round hole. The commanders on the ground were left to figure out how to make that happen while under fire and the results were not always neat and tidy. Indeed, the Canadian ASIC was considered by BGen Fraser to be under performing for the first two months of operations, which resulted in the deployment of a four-man intelligence liaison team from Maj Gen Freakley's headquarters in Bagram to CTF Aegis so that American intelligence could be pushed to Kandahar. In April, however, the Canadian ASIC scored: it produced the most comprehensive analysis of insurgent 'ratlines' from Pakistan into Regional Command (South) seen so far.[23]

Counter-IED Operations

The Canadian PRT was confronted in 2005 with a substantially altered threat environment. The insurgency employed suicide vehicle-borne IEDs throughout Kandahar City and its approach routes for several months and, by December 2005, IEDs were deployed against PRT and other coalition long-range patrols in rural areas. The rural bomb makers tended to use pressure plate and radio-controlled IEDs as singular devices, though TF Gun Devils had seen IEDs used to initiate complex ambushes in their area of operations.

The slow Canadian equipment acquisition process meant that TF Orion did not deploy to Afghanistan with any counter-IED equipment. By this point in the war, the Americans used a Route Clearance Package (RCP) to sweep roads ahead of convoys. An RCP consisted of a blast-resistant sensor vehicle that resembled a road grader; a huge six-wheeled angular

vehicle equipped with an arm carrying a sensor package and a "hand"; and an RG-31-like vehicle transporting an EOD robot. There were only so many route clearance packages to go around and it became yet another scarce enabler that Canada had to bid for. The lack of a Canadian route clearance package capability meant that LCol Hope had to decide on the level of risk that each operation would entail – risk increased if route clearance packages were not available. In an ideal world, the operational tempo would have been governed by the availability of route clearance package resources. But what if the enemy suddenly increased their optempo and overwhelmed TF Orion's ability to respond with route clearance package resources? If higher headquarters insisted that all operations be accompanied by route clearance packages, and there were not enough available but the enemy increased their operations and forced TF Orion to respond, decisions had to be made and these had larger implications as to what was and what was not possible. TF Orion never cancelled an operation or closed a route due to lack of a route clearance package.

More fundamentally, there were not enough ECM transmitters to go around TF Orion. In later years, every Canadian vehicle carried its own ECM transmitter. In the first half of 2006, there was barely one transmitter for every five vehicles and in the early days, this proportion was worse: only 18 sets were available and those were inherited from the PRT. That meant that each convoy had to keep its vehicles within the invisible ECM "bubble" and ensure there were enough ECM-equipped vehicles to have coverage of the column. In many cases, the CIMIC and PSYOPS G Wagons in TF Orion were modified to carry the ECM equipment. If TF Orion wanted to maintain the operational tempo needed, there was always a risk as there was never enough ECM coverage for operations.

Canadian EOD capability initially remained similar to that employed by the PRT. Connections between various coalition counter-IED organizations continued to develop. The Combined Explosives Exploitation Cell continued to exchange valuable information with Canadian organizations on the devices and their employment and both built up databases and "signatures" of bomb makers. In early 2006 Canadian efforts coalesced when a technical assistance visit evolved into a Tactical Exploitation Team. This team, called TF IED Defeat, deployed on every IED strike that it could, depending on protection and transport, and assessed each attack to determine patterns of Canadian behaviour as well as enemy behaviour. This information was disseminated within the Canadian units so that they could improve their convoy tactics.[24]

Photo Credit: Author

The constant competition with insurgent bomb makers forced the Army to constantly upgrade its vehicles. With the Iltis and G Wagon deemed too vulnerable, the RG-31 with a remote weapon system was acquired in 2006 to move Provincial Reconstruction Team patrols around the province. This one was subjected to a ball-bearing attack committed by a suicide bomber in Kandahar City in June 2007. The occupants survived with no injuries.

Early Task Force Orion Operations: Shah Wali Kot District

When TF Orion flowed into theatre in January 2006, the situation on the ground was not significantly different from the one TF Gun Devils and the PRT were engaged in in late 2005. The main insurgent threat was in the rugged Shah Wali Kot and Mianishin districts in northern Kandahar province. (See Figure 10-2)

These Taliban groups, supported through Oruzgan and Zabul provinces, were engaged in hit-and-run raids on Afghan outposts and facilities, and ambushing security forces and road construction crews when possible. IED use was increasingly prevalent. TF Orion moved into the Gun Devils facilities, including the Gumbad Platoon House which was situated to observe and, when required, project force into (or onto) a feature dubbed "The Belly Button," a natural mountain fortress situated in western Shah Wali Kot. At this point, the Afghan government was attempting to establish district centres and schools in the northern districts, and there was a major road construction project snaking north from Kandahar City to Oruzgan. This was called Tarinkot road.

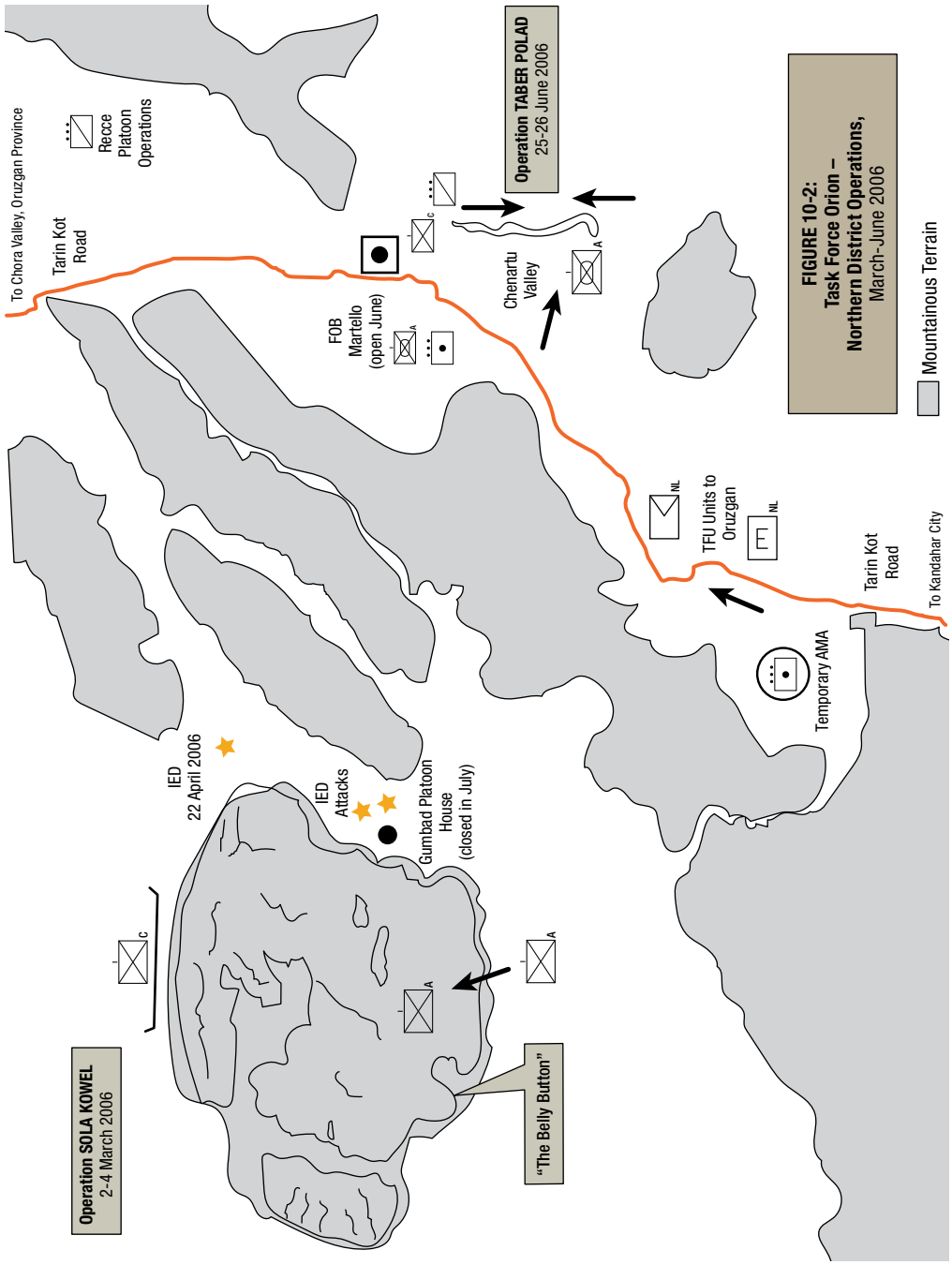


Figure 10-2: Task Force Orion – Northern District Operations, March-June 2006

The Tarinkot road project was important from a number of standpoints. First, it would become a major trade route with positive spinoff benefits for Oruzgan farmers; it would permit agricultural products in Oruzgan to flow to markets in Kandahar City. Second, connecting the mountainous Oruzgan province with Kandahar would reduce that province's isolation, a state of affairs that the Taliban exploited for their purposes – in effect, northern Helmand province, Oruzgan province and northwestern Zabul province were believed to hold what CJTF-76 called "sanctuary areas." Third, the incoming Dutch task force had to be able to safely deploy to Tarinkot, establish their base and replace the American PRT. The only real way to do that was to drive there from KAF.

Eventually TF Orion established FOB Martello just east of the Tarinkot road in upper Shah Wali Kot district and deployed Maj Gallinger's A Company to it. FOB Martello served as a waypoint for the Dutch convoys as well as a power projection base in the northern districts. With additional forces operating from the Gumbad Platoon House to the west, the idea was to keep the Taliban off balance while the provincial government consolidated in the district, and commercial and military road traffic flowed north and south. The PRT, with Michael Callan's Confidence in Government initiative pilot project, was supposed to play a major role here.

TF Orion's first contacts were in this district. Recce Platoon and a Coyote detachment had a brief contact on 4 February 2006 near Mianishin. This was a big surprise to the Taliban, who had never seen vehicles of this type so far into the mountains. Gumbad Platoon House was also attacked in mid-February. TF Orion responded with heavy weapons and M-777 artillery fire.[25]

Photo Credit: Author

The inhospitable Shah Wali Kot district, depicted here during Task Force Orion operations in summer 2006, consisted of rocky mountainous terrain. It was classic guerrilla warfare territory but was relatively isolated from main population centres in the province.

Before Martello could be constructed, however, the enemy had to be disrupted with a deliberate operation. A and C Companies from TF Orion mounted Operation SOLA KOWEL into the Belly Button on 18-20 March. Scaling the rocky hills at night, A Company swept through the feature hoping to drive the enemy into the arms of C Company. Unfortunately, the enemy had departed the area.[26]

After SOLA KOWEL, the insurgents in the district changed their operating methods and resorted to increased IED use, particularly in and around the Gumbad area. Two attacks in spring were followed by a massively lethal attack on 22 April 2006. BGen David Fraser's close protection party was attacked with a remotely detonated mine stack, killing Cpl Matthew Dinning, Bombardier Myles Mansell, Cpl Randy Payne and Lt Bill Turner. In a separate incident CIMIC officer Capt Trevor Greene was subjected to a vicious axe attack as he parlayed with local leaders in the district. He survived, but it was evident that the insurgents saw CIMIC projects as a threat to their objectives and sought to disrupt them. At the same time, the Taliban mounted a "night letter" intimidation campaign against the mullahs in the district. As TF Orion had little or no PSYOPS capability, and CTF Aegis was still sorting itself out in this area, it was not possible to mount a coherent information operations campaign to counter the Taliban's campaign at this time.

A variety of sweeps, and cordon and search operations throughout the district conducted by A and C Companies during March, April and May 2006 were successful in disrupting insurgent operations. Though there was little contact, at no time during this period were the insurgents successfully able to interdict the Tarinkot road in Shah Wali Kot. Indeed, conditions were deemed acceptable to open the Shah Wali Kot district centre.[27] The enemy did, however, pose a significant challenge to attempts to expand governance elsewhere in the northern parts of the district. As spring and summer progressed, the Dutch task force was able to deploy virtually unmolested to its new home in Oruzgan but the Taliban threat in Shah Wali Kot remained. These operations were not without casualties, however. In March 2006, a vehicle accident killed MCpl Tim Wilson and Cpl Paul Davis.

Operation KATERA: Helmand Province, March 2006

Early on in the tour, TF Orion and the NSE were confronted with the first of their unplanned out-of-area tasks. As we have seen, CTF Aegis' plan was to have the battle group work with the Afghan National Army and the PRT in Kandahar province in order to develop synergy between governance, security, and reconstruction. Operation KATERA and subsequent operations of a similar nature in Helmand province essentially invalidated that CTF Aegis plan by spring and summer 2006.

Photo Credit: Author

The Chenartu Valley in Shah Wali Kot district was the scene of a major Task Force Orion operation in June 2006. Here Captain Jon Hamilton's Recce Platoon races in its RG-31 vehicles to raid a compound believed to contain insurgent communications equipment.

Canadian involvement in Helmand province was controversial because of the central role that poppy cultivation played in Helmand (both in the economy and the local religious/political culture) and how it connected to the global narcotics trade. The main issue for Canada revolved around counter-narcotics policy. Simply put, there were two views on the matter. One view was that poppy cultivation and processing undermined attempts to establish centralized government authority at all levels from Helmand to Kabul; it was a threat to domestic tranquility in European countries, and therefore poppy eradication should be a central tenet of coalition security operations. The alternative view was that poppy eradication and active suppression of the lowest end of the narcotics trade in Afghanistan would push the population in affected areas into the hands of the insurgents who were more than willing to provide protection and support to those affected by coalition security operations. The British government, the American Drug Enforcement Administration and U.S. State Department were in the first camp,[28] while the U.S. Department of Defense, the intelligence community and the Canadian government were in the second. The Afghan government in Kabul leaned toward the first, probably out of considerations related to international community and bi-lateral proclivities or pressure vis-à-vis reconstruction funding.[29]

Canada did not want its forces used to combat 'narcos.' That was technically a policing problem. However, TF Orion initially worked for CTF Bayonet and then worked for a Canadian-led but coalition headquarters, CTF Aegis, which in turn worked for an American headquarters, CJTF-76. When the U.S. State Department-funded and poorly named 'Afghan Eradication Force' deployed into Helmand in spring 2006 to conduct poppy eradication

operations, CJTF-76 was instructed to provide fire support to the force *in extremis*. TF Bayonet tasked TF Orion to have a company on three hours' notice to move to go and aid the eradication force. LCol Hope declined this task and, through the NCE, he had Col Noonan intervene. However, in March 2006, a Canadian infantry platoon from TF Orion had just rotated into the divisional QRF job when the Afghan Eradication Force came under attack in Helmand province. It was now possible that Canada could be dragged into supporting eradication efforts.[30]

To the average Afghan in Helmand, the Afghan Eradication Force was indistinguishable from a coalition-Afghan military unit. It had American ETT advisors for the Afghan National Army component, Afghan National Police of various types from northern provinces, UH-1N helicopters armed with Gatling guns, and it used U.S. Special Forces forward operating bases like FOB Wolf (later renamed FOB Robinson) near Sangin in Helmand province for resupply and support. All the average poppy farmer saw was a Western-dominated and -equipped force coming to strip him of his livelihood. He might also have seen coalition special operations forces poking around in preparation for the deployment of British forces from Mazar-e Sharif. He would have heard that the British were coming and would have been unable to make the fine distinction between them and the Afghan Eradication Force. As an Afghan National Army intelligence officer explained to CTF Aegis, "the counter-narcotics campaign has become a propaganda tool for the Taliban. They encourage and provoke people to defend their lands [and] the government's inability to compensate farmers for the destruction of their crops has made the situation even worse."[31] Organized, clan-based resistance to the Afghan government in Helmand was inevitable under these circumstances. Taliban support was a certainty. Clearly, nothing had been learned from the Wardak province experience with the Central Poppy Eradication Program back in 2004.

FOB Robinson came under attack on 29 March 2006 after the Afghan Eradication Force started to plow up poppy fields in the Sangin Valley. An Afghan National Army kandak with French and American ETTs operating near Sangin in operations unrelated to eradication operations came under attack on Highway 611. This unit was cut to pieces in a complex ambush and two French soldiers were killed and mutilated. The remnants made it to FOB Robinson, when they came under coordinated attack.

This situation highlighted the pitfalls of uncoordinated operations. The Special Forces reported to CJSOTF-A in Bagram; the ETTs reported to TF Phoenix in Kabul; the Afghan Eradication Forces reported to authorities in Kabul; and the Afghan kandak had an unclear chain of command. None had any relationship to CTF Aegis or its operations. The Canadian-led headquarters, however, had some situational awareness and heard garbled reports from the French ETTs. BGen Fraser decided to deploy the Aegis reserve to stabilize the situation at FOB Robinson and a Canadian infantry platoon deployed by Chinook helicopter to Sangin.

On arrival, however, the confused command and control situation generated a situation whereby Pte Robert Costall was accidentally shot and killed by U.S. Special Forces defenders of the facility. The attack against FOB Robinson, however, was rebuffed and during the firefight 60 attackers were killed. It was not clear exactly who conducted the attack but there was a strong belief in many quarters that it was the Taliban working with local clans protecting their power base and economic interests.[32] (See Figure 10-3)

This second incident involving the death of a Canadian soldier to American friendly fire presented an extremely sensitive situation on a number of levels that could have had serious political ramifications for domestic support for the mission. At the same time, CTF Aegis was in danger of being drawn into alignment with poppy eradication efforts, something that BGen Fraser wanted to completely avoid. There was American pressure channeled through Maj Gen Freakley to get in and assist, no matter what the circumstances or future consequences.[33]

The assault prompted CTF Aegis to agree to the temporary deployment of Maj Bill Fletcher's C Company, plus Coyote surveillance vehicles and M-777 guns to FOB Robinson. The battle group tactical headquarters also deployed. Sperwer TUAV surveillance operations were also mounted in support of this operation, with the mobile forward link system deployed so that TUAV could be controlled all the way from KAF. This deployment took place just in time as ambushes started in earnest along Route 611, the main road from Highway 1 up to FOB Robinson in Sangin. For the next month, C Company and its supporting forces worked with a U.S. Special Forces ODA and its associated Afghans identifying and disrupting the emergent insurgent organizations in and around Sangin. These involved intelligence-cued cordon and searches, local engagement with the population, anti-ambush and sweep operations designed to nab leadership targets. On 28 April 2006, C Company took out an eight-man Taliban ambush team at 1 500 metres using night sights and a 25mm cannon.[34]

Like the FOB Martello/Gumbad Platoon House operations, Operation KATERA played a role in keeping the insurgents or potential insurgents on their heels while the British force deployed into Helmand province. Unfortunately, a line had already been crossed. The population could not distinguish between counter-narcotics operations, security operations against Taliban insurgents, or efforts to extend Afghan governance and development to remote areas in the province. A province that saw comparatively little violence since 2003 was about to explode with long-term repercussions not only for TF Orion but also for the whole coalition over the next five years.[35] In time, the war in Helmand would compete with the war in Kandahar for scarce coalition resources and in particular Canadian resources.

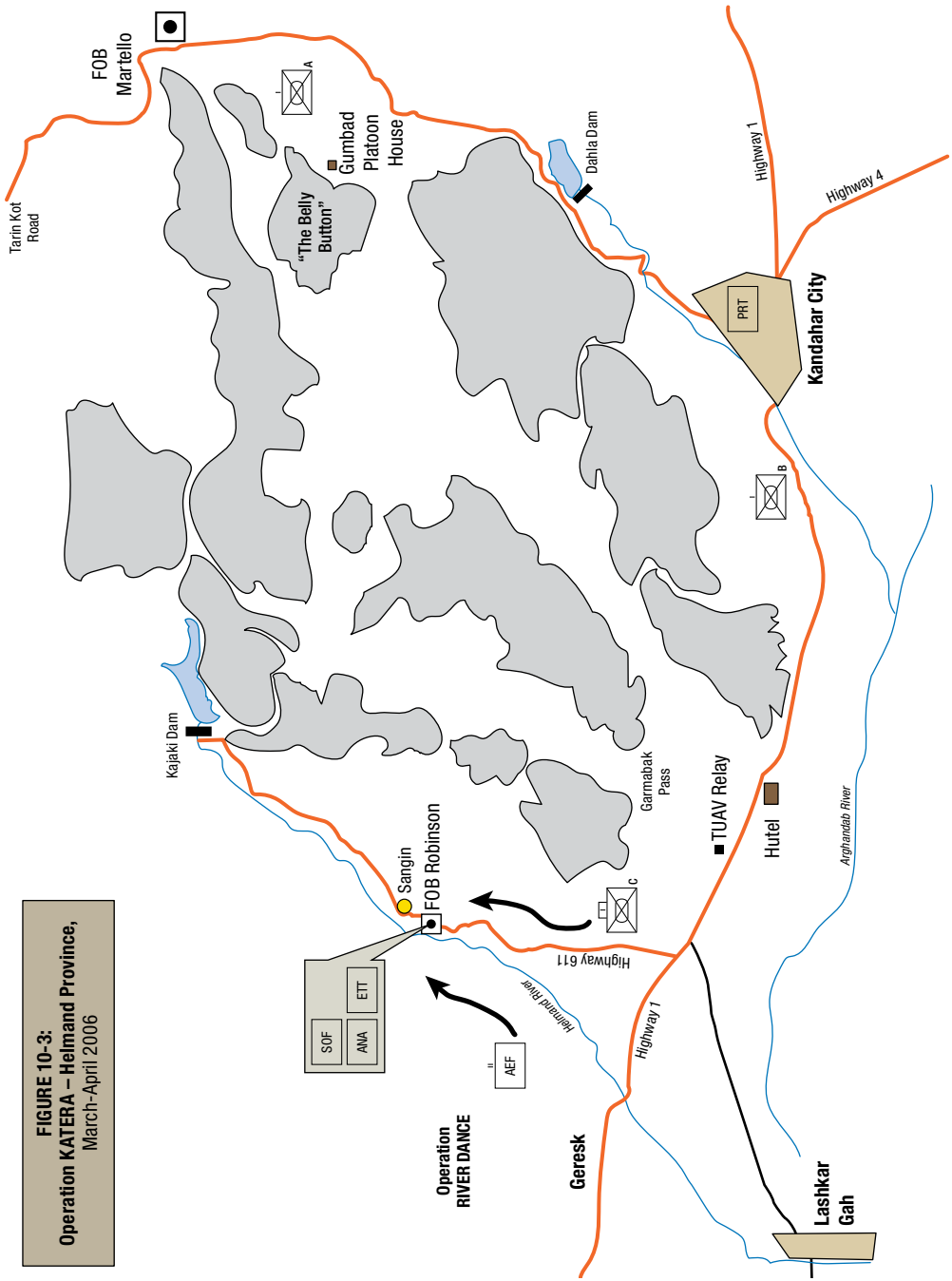


FIGURE 10-3:
Operation KATERA – Helmand Province,
March-April 2006

Figure 10-3: Operation KATERA – Helmand Province, March-April 2006

CTF Aegis continued to observe developments in Helmand but what analysts uncovered was unsettling. Two primary 'narco' organizations cooperated with each other: the Ghazni Group and the Helmand Group. The Ghazni Group was believed to include Arif Noorzai and Kandahar Governor Asadullah Khalid. The Helmand Group was believed to consist of Sher Mohammad Akhund (former Helmand Governor), Mohammed Issa Noorzai, Bashir Noorzai and Oruzgan governor Jan Mohammad Khan. Akhund and the Noorzais were believed to have commercial links to the Taliban and possibly Al Qaeda. Bashir Noorzai was linked to practically everyone before his 2005 arrest in New York; he was a former HiG organizer, and he was connected to ISI as well as Governor Gul Agha Sherzai, and Taliban leaders Mullah Omar and Mullah Baradar of the Quetta Shura. The 'connective tissue' between the two groups was Ahmad Wali Karzai, who was married to Arif Noorzai's sister.[36]

This level of complexity and how it interacted with what CTF Aegis was attempting to implement in southern Afghanistan appeared to be overwhelming at the time. If the 'narcos' were part of the government, and the government was under attack by the 'narcos' and the insurgency, what could be done? Was it possible to focus solely on the insurgent cells themselves and conduct development activities in isolation of this problem? That was a possibility. The Taliban, HiG and Al Qaeda cells presented a measurable and definable security threat, while low-level and provincial-level development appeared to have little to do with the narco-complex and its interests.

Fraser and CTF Aegis understood the limitations as to what they could accomplish in this area and as a result maintained a watch on it as much as they could while attempting to determine what the longer-term ramifications were. Indeed, Fraser used Asadullah Khalid's narco involvement against him as leverage when he needed to do so to move the goal posts forward in the security and development arenas. In addition, with the acceleration of enemy action in Regional Command (South) in June and July 2006, the priority was defeating the insurgency, not worrying about long-term issues. When Operation MEDUSA ramped up in the late summer, it all became moot as the survival of the coalition effort in the whole southern region was at stake. Fraser understood the problems of narco interaction with the government in the south, but there was no alternative to dealing with them in order to protect the civilian population and the development effort. Fraser referred to this as "The Devil That You Know" policy.[37]

Camp Nathan Smith: Problems at the Provincial Reconstruction Team

The assassination of Glyn Berry in January 2006 generated a series of short- and long-term negative effects on the PRT. The first was the Board of Inquiry into the assassination itself. By this time, TF Orion had adopted a night movement protocol to, from and in Kandahar City in order to minimize the risk of IED attacks. The Board of

Inquiry wanted to visit the site where the Berry convoy had been attacked and wanted to do it in daylight. In what PRT officers deemed an "extremely reckless" move, the Board nonetheless deployed by convoy to the Highway 4 'IED Alley' strike site. The Board's convoy was predictably struck with a suicide vehicle-borne IED. Captain Bryan Flemming and his 12 RBC reconnaissance troop rescued the Board, their disabled LAV III and four wounded Canadian soldiers, one with life-threatening injuries. The loss of the vehicle and personnel reduced the PRT sortie rate.[38]

As for the long-term effects, DFAIT and CIDA pulled their personnel out after Berry's death, and refused to return unless stringent close protection and other security measures were implemented by the Canadian Forces and DND: this took months to sort out. During that time, little or nothing was done to maintain continuity on the important governance projects initiated in late 2005. The RCMP CIVPOL officers remained in Kandahar and maintained contact with the Afghan police. The DFID representative was in the process of transitioning out as the British took over in Helmand and the Dutch in Oruzgan province. The USAID representative, frustrated with the imposed inactivity, aligned herself with the American SOF community and supported their activities.[39]

One of the most significant changes was the loss of American Commanders Emergency Response Program money. Those funds belonged to CTF Bayonet. When CTF Aegis took over, those funds dried up overnight, and shut down several higher-level development and reconstruction programmes. This left a handful of American Civil Affairs teams and their CERP money and then they departed in May. CTF Aegis was a Canadian-led headquarters working for an American division. There were no administrative provisions for it to access and deploy CERP monies.[40]

To compound the situation, the decision made by Ottawa planners to merge the PRT and the TF Orion battle group proved to be less than constructive. The PRT commander, LCol Tom Doucette, reported to the battle group commander, LCol Hope. The PRT had to compete for resources, particularly in the "enabler" department – the integral EOD, public affairs, intelligence staff and support capacities were now subsumed by the battle group stationed at Kandahar Air Field, which the PRT commander did not control. This introduced yet another layer of friction into the system as the PRT commander had to ask an organization at KAF if he could use those resources, and they might be prioritized elsewhere.[41]

More importantly, the two platoons from B Company designated to provide force protection for the PRT's reconstruction operations were increasingly pulled away for security operations conducted by the battle group, which meant that there was only a sporadically available "delivery system" for OGDs to get out and about – even if they wanted to. The Provincial Development Committee was moribund; the National Solidarity Programme could not be implemented. Then the PRT commander had to be repatriated early, leaving

Maj Erik Liebert in command. In short, the PRT was a mess which Maj Liebert had to sort out. PRT development and reconstruction initiatives were in trouble on almost all fronts and Canada was steadily losing credibility with the Afghan population at all levels throughout spring 2006. Promises had been made and there was little or no delivery.

This loss of credibility with the population was connected to the PRT's inability to have an effect on mentoring governance at the provincial level. It was recognized by Canadians that, as in Kabul, elements in the Kandahar power structure were involved in illicit and unsavory activities. A decision was made to work with these elements. There were two reasons for this. First, those individuals were assigned to the province by the democratically elected Karzai government, and second, there was a belief that in time these elements could eventually be steered toward more productive activity later. Once again, the lessons of Kabul were not necessarily applicable to Kandahar, and of note, the Canadian personalities that coalesced in Kabul and were able to make headway there had no equivalent counterparts in Kandahar. The Afghan population did not necessarily trust the provincial power structure and Canada was seen to be supporting it.[42]

A significant additional problem involved domestic Canadian politics. Criticism by the media, the opposition and others pushed the government to demonstrate progress on development. The unwillingness to publicly explain that the deteriorating security situation was affecting development, coupled with the government's inability to convince CIDA and DFAIT to get back to work in Kandahar, generated pressure on those left at the PRT to 'be seen' to be 'doing development' as a counter to the critic's perception that there was 'too much kinetic activity' – regardless of the realities of the situation. Though this was never explicitly stated, this pressure was felt by those in the forward operating environment.[43]

TF Orion had plans to mitigate some of these problems. LCol Hope wanted to move the other government departments' representatives from the PRT to the Governor's Palace and work closely with the Provincial Coordination Centre and Governor Asadullah Khalid in a more direct fashion. In that way, the PRT might transition to be more like a SAT-A organization and have a better chance at mentoring change in Kandahar. Two things derailed this plan. First, LCol Doucette's TAC convoy accidentally killed a civilian taxi driver. The subsequent chain of events resulted in LCol Doucette's re-deployment to Canada and further disruption to PRT activities. Second, CEFCOM planners consulted the follow-on task force, TF 3-06, about what they wanted to do about the PRT, the Joint Coordination Centre and governance mentoring. Their reply was that they wanted to retain the existing structure. No changes were made and a new PRT commander was sought in Canada.[44]

Maj Liebert and the remaining PRT staff stepped into the breach to impose some order on the chaos. It was like an "Apollo 13" situation: practically every 'system' had 'crashed.'

What could reasonably be accomplished with the resources at hand? Unlike the previous PRT, the Orion PRT had a beefed-up CIMIC component. There was Quick Impact Project money, and there was still a Commanders Contingency Fund. The CIVPOL officers were still ready, willing, and able to continue with police assessment and mentoring tasks. There were non-governmental organizations operating independently in Kandahar that had resources. Then Canadian money was suddenly thrown at the PRT so they could spend it and be seen to be 'doing development.' The issue that emerged was this: how much damage would short-term instant gratification reconstruction cause to long-term mentoring and development? That question was never seriously addressed in 2006.

Maj Liebert and his staff sought out 'synergies,' places and situations where the resources they had available to them could be employed to improve more than one line of operation. The staff agreed that there were four lines of operations: security, health, education and support to tactical operations. An example of one such 'synergy' was a plan to support girls' education and then use the schools as a distribution point for cooking oil. Another example (among many) was the PRT's attempts to rationalize health care in Kandahar City and work with the emergent Ministry of Health; there were several hospitals and clinics, one of which belonged to the Afghan National Army and another to the police. The PRT worked to get 'cross pollination' between the staffs of these institutions with the intended effects of improving health care delivery to the population across the board, but also to improve health care to the security forces so that they would become more effective. There was no reason, for example, why an Afghan police medic could not improve his skills alongside a civilian doctor.[45]

Blocks to this came, surprisingly, from the Red Cross/Red Crescent who insisted that they were neutral and resisted having anything to do with the PRT. That situation was an example of a larger problem. Non-governmental organizations like the International Committee of the Red Cross were in fact undermining the Afghans' ability to govern; they provided health care to wounded insurgents in what was a government hospital. That sort of problem replicated itself in other areas and posed severe challenges to reconstruction and development efforts. First, there was no incentive for the emergent Afghan government to take over basic services if non-governmental organizations were doing it for them and second, it made a non-governmental organization appear to be more legitimate than the government to the population.[46]

Supporting tactical operations with CIMIC was increasingly important as the battle group's operational tempo dramatically increased in spring. This situation posed yet another question. Where did CIMIC stop and development start? Without the development experts *in situ* at the PRT, CIMIC was left to its own devices to traverse that grey area, especially when CIMIC became the temporary delivery system for development funds.

In time, there was almost no distinction between tactical CIMIC and development, which posed challenges and longer-term problems between the military and civilian entities at the PRT as the years rolled on.

To confuse matters further, CTF Aegis became increasingly involved in trying to coordinate PRT operations and development across its area of responsibility in southern Afghanistan. As the Dutch and British PRTs stood up in Oruzgan and Helmand, more and more thought was given to linkages at the formation level. All in all, there were far too many inputs trying to influence what was going on at the Kandahar PRT provided by entities that did not appreciate the ground-level problems that were being encountered by the coalition – and that did not even take into consideration the lethal impact of insurgent activity.

LCol Hope, Maj Liebert and the PRT staff did what they could with what they had. They identified, early on, critical things that needed to be done to stabilize the situation for reconstruction. For example, they identified the dangers of having an independent prison system that was disconnected to the (virtually non-existent) legal system. They noted, in particular, problems with Sarposa Prison. The lack of impact by the German-led policing 'pillar' in Kabul was highlighted time and again, as the Canadian CIVPOL moved around and mentored the various police forces in and around the city. The procedural difficulties encountered in trying to use CIDA money for police support projects, however, prevented the PRT from implementing effective programmes that would have improved the policing situation in 2006.

One of the most important issues identified by the PRT at that time was the religious situation in Kandahar City and in the south. Padre Suleyman Demiray, the Canadian Forces' Imam, joined the PRT early in 2006. After meeting with religious leaders, he developed significant insight into the role of the mullahs and the Kandahar Ulema Shura in Afghan political life. Indeed, religion and politics are not separate in Afghanistan as they are in Canada. The Kandahar Ulema Shura, it turned out, was a battleground unto itself. The Taliban were doing everything they could to eliminate moderate members of this body and advance the careers of those who supported the extremist view of Islam. The Kandahar Ulema Shura, as a respected pre-eminent religious body in the south, had the potential to influence the rural mullahs and the National Ulema Shura in Kabul. Unfortunately, potentially valuable connections to the Kandahar Ulema Shura were unable to mature in 2006 as it had an antagonistic relationship with the Governor, which compounded the provision of security and of a financial livelihood to its members. At the same time, the strong potential for religious engagement was lost in the flurry of high-tempo operations that summer. This would also have detrimental long-term effects on Canadian operations over the course of the next few years.[47]

On the positive side, the PRT was able to secure the services of Michael Callan from CIDA by summer 2006. The emergent Confidence in Government project, dormant since January, was re-activated, initiated in Shah Wali Kot district, and eventually became a catalyst for NSP mechanisms in the province by 2007. That development thread will be taken up in a subsequent chapter.

An important PRT function that was shrouded in secrecy at the time was its significant role in counter-terrorism operations inside Kandahar City. Camp Nathan Smith served as a forward operating base for SOF operations directed against the urban terrorist cells that were operating in the nearby Loy Wala neighbourhood; it had a helipad, translation capabilities, and medical facilities that were drawn on from time to time. SIGINT facilities were also discreetly installed so that enemy communications could be "DF'd" (direction finding operations) and monitored, and counter-intelligence operatives collected HUMINT from sources in a comparatively safe environment. The Afghan Ministry of the Interior and other ANSF representatives at Camp Nathan Smith provided a significant flow of information as well to those who needed it.

The Afghan National Security Forces in 2006

The state of ANSF development in southern Afghanistan was poor. The Afghan National Army, in theory, was supposed to have a brigade for each province. Each was supposed to consist of three infantry kandaks (battalions), a combat support kandak and a combat service support kandak. Additionally, a corps headquarters, 205 (Hero) Corps, commanding all of it, was to be established in Kandahar. The reality was that there was a three-kandak brigade in Zabul, a kandak in Kandahar, and two kandaks in Helmand. None of these units were really capable of operating above platoon level. All were mentored by American ETTs and French SOF – and even those teams were thin in on the ground. One ETT even consisted of U.S. Navy submariners.[48] As we have seen, the CTF Aegis campaign plan saw the twinning of a kandak with each national battle group in each province. That was the ideal, in a plan established under less arduous conditions.

On numerous occasions, Canadian commanders from Ottawa visited Kabul and met with Abdul Rahim Wardak, the Minister of Defence. Word would come down that more ANA troops were coming, but then none arrived. There was competition between the CJSOTF and the conventional forces for Afghan National Army kandaks in southern Afghanistan. In some cases, kandaks were hived off to Oruzgan to work with American SOTFs there or in Zabul. CANSOF took over partnership with a kandak in April 2006. CTF Aegis was, however, not situationally aware enough early on in 2006 to bureaucratically compete with CJSOTF for these resources. At the same time, the Ministry of Defence in Kabul kept numerous kandaks in and around Kabul 'on tap' in case of a coup attempt.

The only Canadian success in this area prior to August was when BGen Fraser used his personal linkages with the 1/205 Corp G3, Maj (later BGen) Habibbi, who was able to get an Afghan National Army infantry company to partner with TF Orion in June-July 2006.[49]

As for the police, the situation was nothing short of catastrophic, particularly in Kandahar province. There were police, and then there were "police." As the PRT CIVPOL reported in late 2005, the "police" were little more than re-uniformed militias that had been disarmed under the DIAG programme. There were Afghan Highway Police, Afghan Border Police, Afghan National Police, and so on, but the Border Police really were Col Abdul Raziq's Spin Boldak militia "police" wearing Border Police uniforms, for example. Regular police had little or no training, though the CIVPOL at the PRT was working to improve that incrementally. For the elections in 2005, the Ministry of the Interior deployed Standby Police Unit 005, a sort of nationally-controlled gendarmerie. It progressively succumbed to Kandahar provincial power broker machinations throughout 2006.[50]

In a general sense, the police units reported to a chain of command that looked nice on a PowerPoint presentation. That chain of command went from the district, to province, to region, to Kabul. The reality was that the "police" coexisted with and overwhelmed this police structure: the "police" reported to provincial power brokers. In some cases, these were all the same people: a district power broker might be a member of parliament but also informally in charge of the police in his district, with a designated district 'chief of police' supposedly running things and interacting with the chain of command. Though this appeared contradictory to Canadians, it was the actual state of affairs and it had to be accommodated by the coalition units on the ground. In effect, the police in a given district would cooperate with coalition forces if, and it was a big if, the interests of their patrons coincided with those of the coalition forces.[51]

It is critical to understand the damaging effects of "police" operations. These organizations, wearing Afghan police uniforms, shook down citizens passing through their territory; indulged in selective poppy eradication; and the insurgents even bribed them to support their activities. If their patrons were associated with the provincial government, "police" actions generated grievances among the population, which the Taliban then exploited to shift the population away from the government. Another important problem was that non-governmental organizations and the UN hired police as guards for their facilities and escorts for their personnel, and they paid better than the government. This reduced the number of effective police (and available weapons) to an even greater extent.[52]

In 2006, there were simply not enough coalition resources to help shift the "police" to become police. The Germans, who were in charge of the policing pillar in Kabul, were rarely if ever seen in Kandahar province, let alone Helmand or Oruzgan. Note that this was five years after the Bonn Agreement. To take up the slack, the Americans created an ad

hoc police mentoring organization, but it was limited in numbers; it was only just getting underway in mid-2006 and had not yet had an impact in southern Afghanistan. CTF Aegis played a positive role in informally and later formally coordinating police development as much as possible across Regional Command (South) but the pressures of fighting the ramped-up insurgency quickly took priority by mid-2006.[53]

The effects of not having enough Afghan police and army personnel in the southern provinces meant that CTF Aegis forces were the only real option when it came to security operations. The effect on TF Orion was that the task force had to be mobile and prepared to either respond or pre-empt insurgent action anywhere in Kandahar province. There was no troop or police density at all. This made reconstruction, development and governance highly problematic and dependent on the insurgents' troop density. The insurgency could not be everywhere at once either, so this set up the operational situation in the province into a series of act-react-act moves between the adversaries, much like a chess game.

Spin Boldak and the United Arab Emirates Initiative

The critical entry point for southern Afghanistan and the regional route from Quetta to Kandahar sat in a sort of twilight zone in 2006. Canadian CIMIC teams from the PRT and human intelligence operators started working in Spin Boldak in late 2005 through PRT auspices. With the restrictions on PRT operations after the Berry assassination, this connectivity dropped away, as did visibility on various nefarious activities. For the most part, French SOF continued to operate there from their forward operating base throughout early to mid-2006. Col Abdul Raziq appeared to have the situation under control through a variety of means, savory and unsavory.

In March-April 2006, CDS General Rick Hillier held meetings with his counterpart from the UAE on the possibility of having the UAE become involved with ISAF efforts in Afghanistan. The UAE was looking to join in the Kabul area, already had special operations forces elements at Bagram Air Field, and had a lot of reconstruction money to spend. An interagency team, with NCE commander Col Putt as the Canadian Forces representative, explored possibilities. Was it possible to get the UAE to join in PRT operations? And if so, what high-cost, high profile projects might they get involved in? Putt and the team canvassed Asadullah Khalid, whose eyes lit up.[54] A priority list was compiled: mosques, schools, hospitals and roads.[55]

Why the UAE? The Emirates contributed to the NATO-led Kosovo Force, both militarily and in terms of reconstruction monies. UAE AH-64 attack helicopters patrolled the skies while UAE Leclerc main battle tanks acted as a deterrent to Serb armour alongside Canadian, British and German armour. Second, the obviously positive benefits of co-religiosity were attractive, as well as the trade and labour connections that already existed. UAE royalty

frequently came to hunt in southern Afghanistan. And there was increasing pressure by the British to have any planned UAE contingent deploy to Helmand province. Strategically for Canada, the UAE hosted Canadian Forces at Minhad and the fleet support activity in Dubai.[56]

The idea evolved so that the Emirates would contribute to the PRT with not only monetary reconstruction resources but also that a mechanized infantry battalion plus a special forces group could take over activities in Spin Boldak as part of ISAF. The initial enthusiasm that built up on the Canadian side dropped off by late summer 2006 as the legal aspects of a memorandum of understanding between the UAE and the government of Afghanistan mired things down.[57]

Then the French SOF abruptly left Spin Boldak in July 2006, with little or no warning. TF Orion had to man the abandoned and now vandalized forward operating base. LCol Hope sent a platoon from C Company to secure the facility, with the intention of deploying the remaining company soon after. However, events in Zharey district and Helmand province ensured that even this activity was delayed. Spin B remained, as it had for years, in the hands of Col Raziq.

B Company Operations: Zharey and Panjwayi Districts

B Company, led by Maj Grimshaw, was the PRT's force protection company and acted as a QRF within Kandahar City but, as spring progressed, the company became more and more focused on operations to the west of the city. In essence, because B Company was connected to the PRT, it had access to a greater variety of information on what was going on in various districts. Some of this information conflicted with prevailing views in higher headquarters as to the nature and extent of the insurgency in the province. In addition to PRT and non-governmental organizations sources, B Company had links to the Joint Provincial Coordination Centre. B Company also started to conduct patrols along Highway 1 west toward Helmand province in anticipation of the British task force deployment. To support those operations, B Company engaged in CIMIC and information collection operations and then established relations with the police in the area. Unlike Shah Wali Kot district, which was mountainous and the population dispersed in rugged terrain, B Company's area of operations was agricultural, densely populated and accessible by road, which facilitated contact with the Afghans.[58] (See Figure 10-4)

What B Company uncovered was a complex array of activity in Zharey and Panjwayi districts. Both were extremely diverse from a tribal point of view. (See Figure 10-5.) The Baqi Network, playing off of tribal discontent between the Panjpai tribes and the Popalzai and Barakzai-dominated provincial government, was still operational and supporting IED attacks in the city from the district. There was poppy cultivation, but there was also selective eradication aggravated by local police corruption. There were water rights disputes,

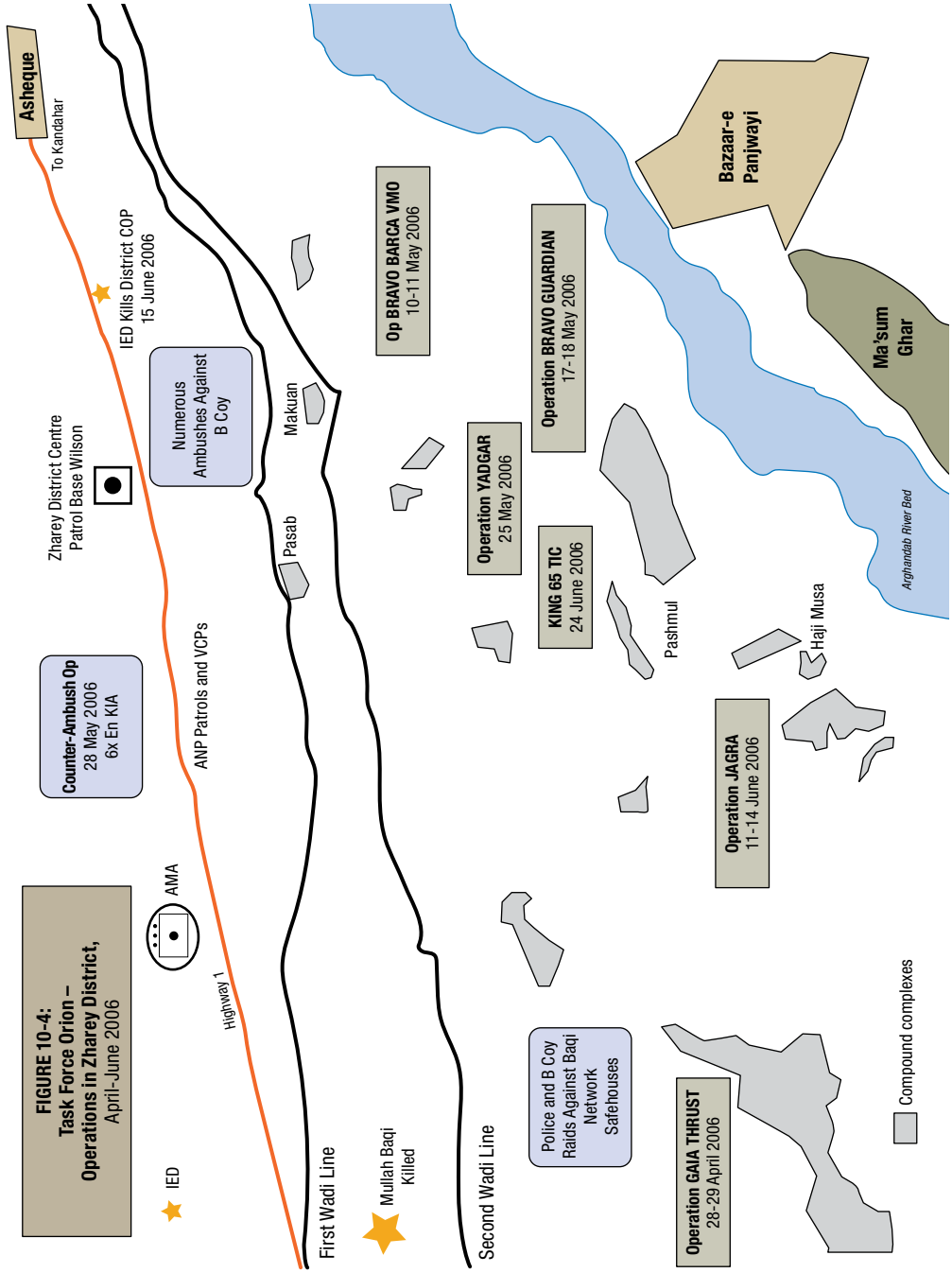
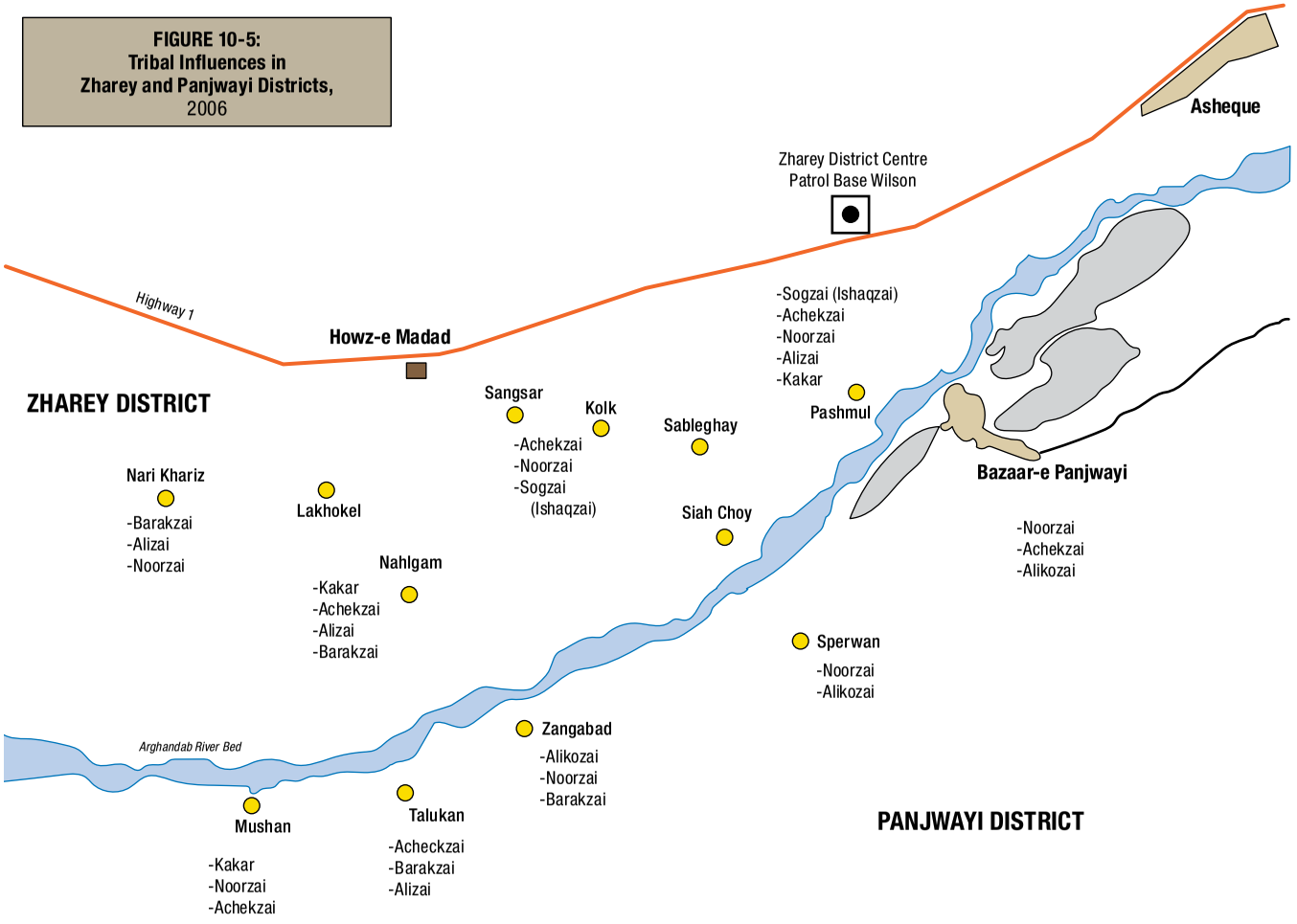


Figure 10-4: Task Force Orion – Operations in Zharey District, April-June 2006

FIGURE 10-5:
Tribal Influences in Zharey and Panjwayi Districts,
2006



Source: Captain Zia Massoud to Author

Figure 10-5: Tribal Influences in Zharey and Panjwayi Districts, 2006

which had violent overtones as water was the basis of crop cultivation, which in turn was how the bulk of the population in Zharey district made its living. It was unclear initially what was Taliban violence and what was commercial or inter-community violence but, as time progressed, B Company saw more and more Taliban involvement in the district. What emerged over the course of several months was that there was a slow and virtually undetected enemy build-up in the Zharey and Panjwayi districts and the enemy were playing on grievances that the local population had with the present provincial power structure.[59]

Eventually, TF Orion established FOB Wilson, later called Patrol Base Wilson, on Highway 1, and co-located it with the Zharey district centre. This base provided a presence in the area, facilitated patrolling along Highway 1, facilitated contact with the Afghan security forces along it and served as a launch pad for operations into the dense, built-up part of the district south of the highway.

The defining terrain types in Zharey and Panjwayi districts were the grape fields, grape drying huts and irrigation systems. The pictures of the next few pages depict the dense nature of the terrain with attendant difficulties of operating in them.

Photo Credit: Author

Seen from the air in summer 2006, the grape trenches are surrounded by walls and flush with growth. A water pumping hut is in the foreground, with three grape drying huts in the background. The huts are made of mud but over the years have developed the consistency of concrete.

Photo Credit: Author

This is a typical grape field in winter. The vines grow on mud walls, which are usually four feet high and, like the other structures in the area, are also the consistency of concrete.

B Company moved in and increased its operational tempo in the district. There were notable successes. Elements of the Afghan police led by the dynamic Qadr Jan working with B Company raided weapons caches and safe houses throughout the district. The infamous Baqi Network, including Mullah Baqi himself, was eventually hunted down and destroyed in an Afghan police operation in Sangsar on 14 April 2006. That led the Taliban leadership to send in high-profile commander Mullah Dadullah Lang in a bid to reconstitute the networks and boost the Taliban presence. That move provided TF Orion with yet another indicator that Zharey district was of increasing importance. Unfortunately, Qadr Jan was hit and killed by friendly fire from an American AH-64 helicopter during a tragic series of miscommunications in the course of these operations. Maj Grimshaw noted that "it was if somebody flicked a switch and the insurgency was on."[60]

TF Orion mounted a series of sweeps and raids into Zharey similar to the operations in Shah Wali Kot, not only to keep the insurgents off balance but also to gather information on them. Although the term "manoeuvre to collect" was not really in vogue yet, this was what these operations amounted to as TF Orion learned about its foe. Information developed from these operations led to data on the presence of senior Taliban commanders Hafiz Majid, Akhtar Mohammad and Khairullah moving into Maywand district in support of Mullah Dadullah Lang's activities in Zharey district.[61] During one of these sweeps,

Photo Credit: Author

The irrigation system connects each grape field with catchment areas that in turn connect to the Arghandab River. In summer, they are filled with water but are also covered in foliage and thus were used by insurgents for concealed movement. Note the height of the Canadian soldiers for comparison.

Photo Credit: Author

This Canadian patrol moves through a grape field in Panjwayi district. Note how congested the field is and the opportunities for concealment it affords a defender.

C Company came under sustained RPG and machine gun fire. With his 25mm cannon inoperable, Sgt Michael Denine climbed out of his LAV III, manned the pintle mounted machine gun and suppressed the enemy with a high volume of fire. He was awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.

After a successful special operations forces strike over in Helmand killed several other enemy commanders, the Afghan National Directorate of Security reported that the Kandahar leadership and Lang were recalled by the Quetta Shura as a result of both the 14 May and 18 May operations to reorganize and alter existing plans. Their sub-commanders all retired to the mountains to the north for the time being.[62] Mullah Dadullah Lang then conducted several interviews with the media and explained that large-scale operations instead of guerilla tactics would be used in the future.[63]

Operation BRAVO GUARDIAN brought in Maj Bill Fletcher's C Company to work with B Company on the Zharey problem on 17-18 May. C Company moved into screening positions south of Highway 1 as B Company and Afghan police forces crossed the Arghandab River and moved north toward Pashmul. AH-64 Apaches engaged fleeing enemy fighters as a B Company platoon took rocket-propelled grenade fire from enemy forces in a compound, which produced casualties. Capt Nichola Goddard, a forward observation officer from 1 RCHA, prepared a fire mission from her LAV III but her vehicle was struck with multiple anti-tank rounds, killing her. A B-1B bomber dropped a 500-pound precision guided munition on the compound, destroying the enemy. The enemy survivors fled the battlefield. This level of violence had not been seen yet in Zharey district, even in fall 2005.[64]

On 22 May 2006, Governor Asadullah Khalid met with BGen Fraser and expressed concern about Zharey and Panjwayi districts. Khalid warned that fighters were coming into Zharey and the enemy were building up their logistics organization. He also told Fraser he met with the other Kandahar power brokers: Mullah Naqib, Haji Agha Lalai Dastagiri and Ahmad Wali Karzai, and they agreed that the enemy would mount attacks on the non-governmental aid organizations and the UN agencies in Kandahar. More protection was required, and Khalid agreed to work more closely with the Provincial Development Committee. Parenthetically, Canadian observers noted that this was one of the first attempts to increase Ahmad Wali Karzai's influence in provincial circles and Khalid supported it.[65]

There was more fighting from 24 to 28 May 2006. An ambush on a B Company patrol, which resulted in the severe wounding of interpreter Niaz "Junior" Mohammed by an RPG round, evolved into a two-company assault supported with M-777 fire onto an enemy defensive position in a grape drying hut complex (Operation YADGAR). Covered with attack helicopters and close air support, the TF Orion force took 11 detainees, killed nine other enemy and wounded an unknown number of insurgents.[66] A B Company

G-Wagon caught fire during the ambush, blocking the road. MCpl Collin Fitzgerald entered the vehicle while under fire and unblocked the road for the rest of the column. He was awarded the Medal of Military Valour.

A subsequent operation conducted from 11 to 14 June, Operation JAGRA, essentially repeated the sweep but from different directions with C Company sweeping the enemy into B Company. There was some contact, with RPG's fired and joint direct attack munitions (JDAM) dropped in reply by a British Harrier aircraft. Unlike previous operations, the enemy were staying in place to fight: they were dying but they were starting to die in place. That was new and unusual. LCol Hope and the TF Orion staff took note. Over the course of weeks, SOF operations significantly increased in the district as more and more intelligence on enemy leadership targets entered the SOF system. Things had changed. Zharey district was hot, and it would get hotter.[67]

Counter Rocket Operations

Kandahar Air Field remained the primary target for insurgent rocketeers. As 2006 progressed, the frequency of the attacks increased. CTF Aegis retained overall responsibility for KAF security, working in conjunction with the Joint Defence Operations Centre (JDOC). The KAF security 'bubble' consisted of a number of 'bands': the outermost band supposedly had Afghan National Police conducting their regular patrols. A Romanian infantry battalion handled security towers on the perimeter of the airfield while a variety of nations, including Canada, rotated the main gate search and security task. The more specialized base defence tasks progressively became the responsibility of the RAF Regiment by 2007. An RAF Regiment squadron brought mortars, snipers, radar, and command and control capacity to bear on the problem. A number of surveillance towers equipped with infrared and thermal imaging camera systems were erected to provide round-the-clock surveillance. The U.S. Air Force also deployed human intelligence teams as part of the effort. Prior to the arrival of the RAF Regiment, Canada provided a QRF on rotation with American, British and Dutch units. To complicate matters, this platoon, led by Capt Kevin Barry, 'belonged' to CJTF-76 in Bagram but was cut to the Joint Defence Operations Centre as required.[68]

The rocket threat consisted of 107mm unguided rockets set up on makeshift launchers and connected to a battery and timer so they could be launched without the 'rocketeer' present. The rockets themselves were of Chinese and later Iranian manufacture. One type of 'launcher' was an "X" made of stakes, with the rocket placed on it and fired by a timer. In a later iteration, the rocket was fired from a tube that was buried in the ground and aligned with the base. These configurations were never used together, which indicated the presence of separate insurgent rocket teams.[69]

Statistical analysis of the point of origin, the trajectory, and the point of impact was used to determine where rockets were fired from – these 'rocket boxes' generally were northwest and northeast of KAF; rockets were rarely fired from the south. How exactly the rockets were brought in to Afghanistan from Pakistan was not clear in 2006, but it was evident that the rocketeers were averse to the wide-open spaces of the south and preferred the more built-up and populated areas between Kandahar City and KAF.[70]

An average rocket attack in 2006 consisted of the radar systems picking up the launch, followed by activation of the base siren, with subsequent scurrying by KAF occupants to concrete bunkers located throughout the base. There was no means of intercepting the rocket once it was launched. The QRF would respond to the point of origin and assess the launch site, interview local people and add to the intelligence picture. When the RAF Regiment deployed, there were more proactive measures taken like the deployment of sniper teams into the rocket boxes.[71]

It was easy to downplay the rocket threat, as they were unguided and inaccurate. That said, KAF was big and getting bigger. The probability of hitting something vital increased over time. A Harrier close support aircraft was destroyed and a dud rocket landed next to the control van for the MQ-1 Predator UAVs. And there were casualties. In July 2006, a Kellogg Brown & Root dining facility located next to the Canadian HQ was struck with a rocket, wounding 14 people, including a Canadian soldier from the Sperwer TUAV detachment. Another narrowly missed the Tim Hortons at the Boardwalk, which caused a temporary loss of morale until it was re-opened. The rocket attacks added some friction into the overall coalition system through the tying up of resources, loss of sleep and in some cases, psychological effects on some individuals. In an information operations sense, the rocket attacks added to the media's perception that there was a state of siege in Kandahar.[72]

The Insurgency Evolves and Combined Task Force Aegis Adapts, June-July 2006

The exact nature of the Taliban's plans in May-June 2006 remains obscure. What was gleaned at the time through a variety of ISTAR means led the TF Orion leadership to conclude that the Taliban sought to mount a series of spectacular attacks inside Kandahar City, something TF Orion referred to as the "Tet Thesis" (named after the Tet Offensive of 1968). The target list included Sarposa Prison, the Governor's Palace, the Governor's Guest House, UNAMA HQ, and the PRT.[73] The overall purpose was to demonstrate to all audiences (domestic, regional and international) that the Afghan government was incapable of governing the province. In theory, this would establish the conditions for sympathetic

elements in the city and its surrounding districts to switch sides and throw out the coalition forces. Something similar had occurred in the mid-1990s with the Taliban and to a certain extent in 2001 with Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. There was no consensus on this theory, however. CJTF-76, for example, expressed its skepticism throughout June 2006.[74]

CTF Aegis's understanding of enemy operations initially relied on assessments made in 2005 by CTF Bayonet and other entities. The Taliban was considered a loose conglomeration of cells, with each cell having 30 or so operatives. The Quetta Shura in Pakistan was the main headquarters for the movement and issued orders directly to the cells. The methodology of the rural cells consisted of direct fire attacks against coalition forces whenever they came within proximity. IEDs were initially used to canalize movement during this time. Mullah Dadullah Lang emerged as the field commander for most of the Taliban cells inside Afghanistan's southern provinces later in 2005, which resulted in the addition of assassination operations and IED terrorism within Kandahar City in the run-up to the elections.[75]

The enemy's augmentation of both the rural effort and the urban effort continued in early 2006 but the methodology was the same and the results remained unimpressive. Indeed, the actions by TF Orion in the northern and western districts of Kandahar were very similar to the TF Gun Devils operations in 2005 and the enemy remained disrupted in those areas.

The 22 May 2006 announcement by Mullah Dadullah Lang that the Taliban would change how it was operating and the subsequent ratification of this change by the Quetta Shura during a meeting held between 23 to 30 May confirmed that CTF Aegis and allied operations had had a significant effect on the enemy from February through April. Indeed, it appeared as though the Quetta Shura was going to weight its operations in Helmand province, where the British position was seen to be weaker than the Canadian position in Kandahar. [76]

Between 3 and 5 June, the Taliban commanders were back in Afghanistan: Hafiz Majid and three of his sub-commanders were holed up somewhere near Talukan in Panjwayi district preparing to implement the new plans. At the same time, the National Directorate of Security picked up indications that HiG groups were on their way into Kandahar province, something deemed unusual by the analysts. Other information noted the movement of groups of Arab and Pakistani fighters from Karachi to Quetta and then into Kandahar City.[77] It was difficult to assess the enemy's intentions but by the end of June, there was better information indicating that Mullah Dadullah Lang and Mullah Baradar's explicit objective was now to capture southern Afghanistan and establish a permanent presence in Kandahar. The Quetta Shura concurred.[78]

There was a belief in coalition circles that if they could keep the Taliban disrupted and frustrated long enough they might want to come to the table and talk. However, with this apparent shift from guerrilla operations to a complex mix of urban terrorism and aspirations towards more conventional operations, it now appeared that opportunities

might emerge to defeat the insurgency outright. Until that opportunity presented itself, however, disruption remained the basis for CTF Aegis operations.[79] This approach took many forms. The manoeuvre units continued in their district-level activities while CTF Aegis looked toward more esoteric means.

One example was the identification of the insurgency's medical system. This included the locations of senior medical personnel, casualty collection points, and medical evacuation 'ratlines' back down to the Durand Line and across it. Despite the overt emphasis on the efficacy of jihadi martyrdom, the Taliban took medical operations seriously. Before mounting operations, the insurgents would create and man casualty collection points and stockpile medical supplies. In many cases, particularly in Zabul and Helmand provinces, these build-ups were identified and disrupted. This was non-kinetic activity: the doctors were told to leave the area and the supplies used to assist the local population. This had a measurable effect on enemy operations in those provinces, but less so in Kandahar or Oruzgan, where the enemy used local government hospitals to handle their casualties.[80]

Another example was the use of special operations forces to identify and monitor the 'ratlines' coming across the Durand Line into Afghanistan. These included the Bahram Chah/Barab Chah region in southern Helmand; an Al Qaeda-built airstrip at Kala Puti in Shorabak district; the Reg Desert, and particularly Spin Boldak, where IED components were passing through. Commanders were monitored going in and out; fighters were observed going in, and casualties seen going out.[81]

Throughout June 2006, CTF Aegis noted the changes to the Taliban's behaviour by identifying where the enemy commanders were located and the types of operations being conducted in each province. For example, the deployment of the al-Zarqawi-trained Mullah Hanan's two 15-man cells and Al Qaeda suicide bombers to Kandahar province were a precursor to a higher than normal level of carnage in Kandahar City. If, for example, Toor Naquib's Taliban fighters in upper Shah Wali Kot were not augmented and continued to mount their usual level of ambushes on the Tarinkot road, this could be ruled out as a possible main effort. If Mullah Shakur and his cells in Chenar and Tambil in Khakrez were doing very little, it was likely that they were not a main effort either. However, the presence of Mullah Dadullah Lang in Helmand and Mullah Baradar in Zabul likely meant that coordinated operations against the coalition forces designed for larger effects would follow in those areas in the near future.[82]

At a higher level, CJTF-76 had to coordinate operations in Regional Command (East) with CTF Aegis's operations in Regional Command (South). At this time, Al Qaeda, and its allies and affiliates had consolidated their positions in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and North and South Waziristan. If CJTF-76 stripped away forces and resources from Regional Command (East) and sent them to support CTF Aegis, would that embolden

the Pakistan-based insurgents to attack Regional Command (East)? The Canadian liaison staff at CJTF-76 warned CTF Aegis that the divisional-level priorities were: operations in the N2K provinces (Nangarhar, Kunar and Khost); border security zone operations in Regional Command (East); and then operations in Regional Command (South). These were about to change, but CTF Aegis had to plan on the basis that they would not be able to control borrowed or assigned assets, particularly the ISTAR collection systems, indefinitely. CTF Aegis had to be selective about what actions it undertook.[83]

Operation MOUNTAIN THRUST, conceived by CJTF-76, was focused on northern Helmand, Oruzgan and northern Zabul. The objectives were to: defeat the Taliban in what CJTF-76 believed to be its sanctuaries; extend government of Afghanistan governance to these areas; and facilitate NATO Stage III expansion. The main effort was Helmand province. Coalition forces in Helmand were to set the conditions for special operations TF Bushmaster to clear out and defeat the Taliban in the Bagran Valley and western Oruzgan. Operations in Zabul and Kandahar were designated as supporting shaping operations. The key tasks were to kill/capture enemy leadership targets and IED cells and interdict Taliban cells in Kandahar City, Qalat and Lashkar Gah.[84]

Operation MOUNTAIN THRUST: Khakrez District, June 2006

MOUNTAIN THRUST involved practically all of CTF Aegis's operating forces, including TF Orion. TF Orion was scheduled to deploy into northern Kandahar province and cordon and search any potential Taliban sanctuary areas and, in a more general sense, act as a block for any Taliban trying to head south to escape coalition forces manoeuvring in Oruzgan.[85]

There were a number of problems with this approach. The first was the plan did not take into account the fine detail of the mountainous, complex ground and there were simply not enough forces to do a 'fine tooth comb' sweep of the entirety of the designated areas. Second, there was no provision to leave behind an Afghan security and governance presence in the areas that were swept. Third, and most important for TF Orion, Operation MOUNTAIN THRUST would take all of Orion's forces from the mid-province districts and the city and send them up north into districts that did not appear to have any enemy in them. The enemy were building up in Zharey and Panjwayi, not in Khakrez or Ghorak. Yes, the enemy had a presence in Shah Wali Kot, but what were they a threat to? They were not seriously interfering with the Tarinkot road and they were remote from Kandahar City.[86]

It was extremely difficult to convince CJTF-76 of this state of affairs. CJTF-76 had already established their trajectory months ago and had allocated ISTAR and other resources to Operation MOUNTAIN THRUST. Those resources were scheduled to head elsewhere

for a subsequent operation, MOUNTAIN LION, in another regional command. Elements in the CJTF-76 staff were not convinced that the Zharey/Panjwayi problem was important enough in the schema of its larger objectives.[87]

The Afghan government in Kandahar province disagreed with CJTF-76 and devised several means of convincing CTF Aegis and TF Orion to mount more operations into Zharey to keep the enemy off balance. There were numerous agendas in play relating to the provincial power structure, not all of them strictly security related, but LCol Hope agreed that there was an emergent problem in the district and lobbied CJTF-76 for another probe into Zharey before Operation MOUNTAIN THRUST kicked off. Operation JAGRA conducted on 12-14 June 2006 sent C and B Companies back into Zharey. The subsequent gunfight that C Company found itself in was further confirmation that the enemy were getting stronger. In this case, enemy forces held their ground and fought before progressively retreating and then dispersing. That was new.[88]

Unfortunately, the forces did not exist for the coalition to garrison Zharey and Panjwayi districts. The entirety of TF Orion moved north for MOUNTAIN THRUST. There were no Afghan National Army kandaks made available to Kandahar province. The American-trained kandaks were not sent to Kandahar and either went to Regional Command (East) or protected Kabul. That left the various 'police' forces, most of which were little better than tribal militias and ill-equipped for counterinsurgency operations, let alone traditional policing. How did a PRT, with a handful of Canadian CIVPOL officers, train and mentor several different partially trained Afghan police forces that were in nearly daily contact with insurgents throughout the province? Where were the German-trained police from Kabul? The inability of the Canadian government to leverage influence in Kabul or with its allies to get more resources for Kandahar province or convince CJTF-76 to alter its perception during this time demonstrated a significant weakness in Canada's ability to integrate government departments and generate synergy in the capital to achieve security objectives in Kandahar province. It fell to the men and women of TF Orion and their successors to bear this burden.[89]

TF Orion deployed to northern Khakrez district on 12 June 2006. (See Figure 10-6)

There was virtually no contact as A and C Companies conducted exhausting cordon and search operations. After several days of inconclusive operations, TF Orion prepared to return south to KAF. A LAV III was struck with a massive mine stack, severely wounding the crew and destroying the vehicle. At the same time, a LAV III from TF Orion's tactical HQ was hit with a pressure-plate IED in Ghorak district. Then two G Wagons from the tactical headquarters were disabled by a suicide vehicle-borne IED on entry into the city, wounding two Canadians and killing nine Afghan civilians. While TF Orion was distracted up north, the Taliban continued their preparations in Zharey district.[90]

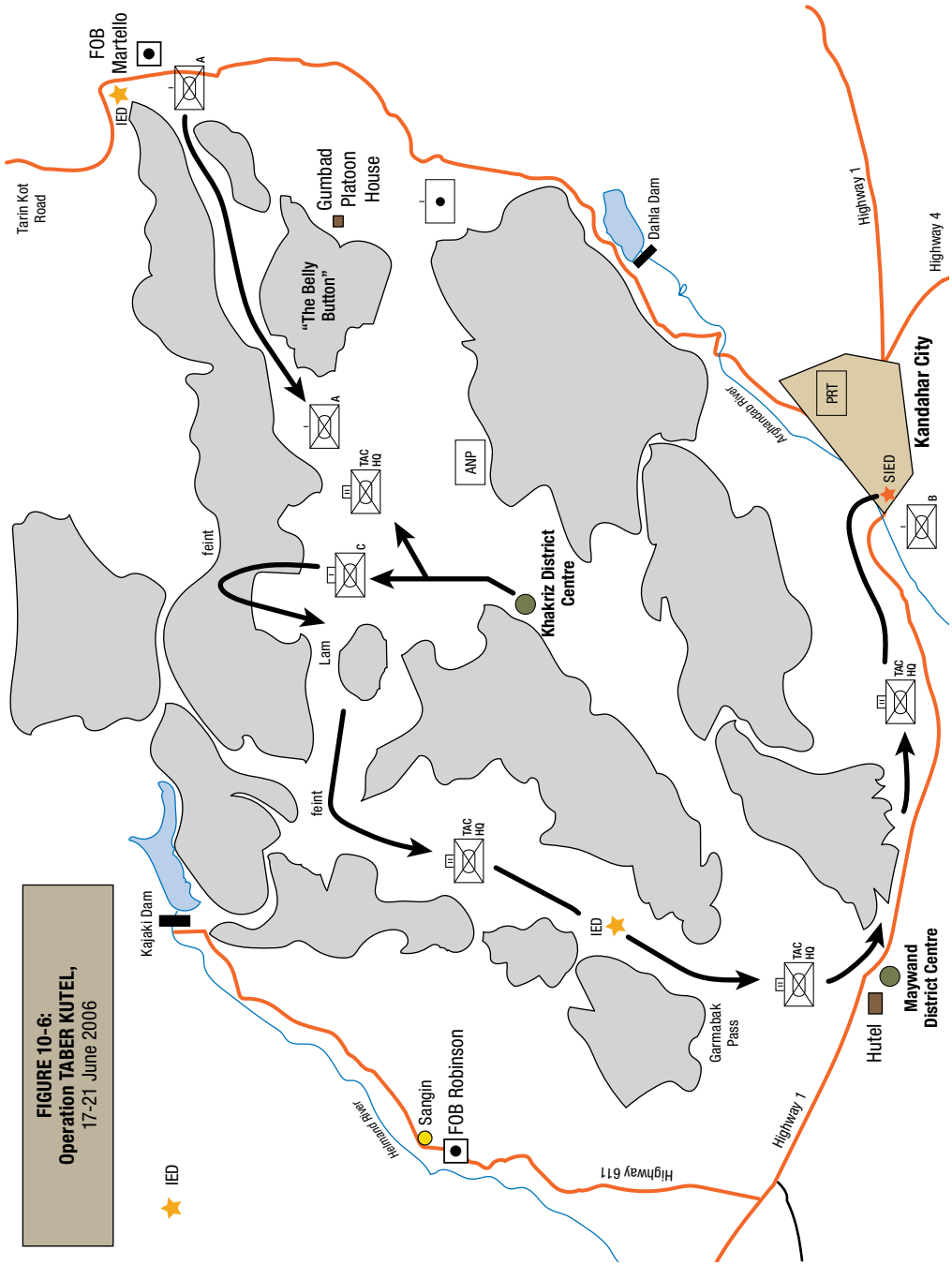


Figure 10-6: Operation TABER KUTEL, 17-21 June 2006

Northern District Operations, June-July 2006

As part of CTF Aegis's ongoing operations in northern Kandahar province related to Operation MOUNTAIN THRUST, one area of interest was the Chenartu Valley, which lay east of the Tarinkot road part-way to Zabul province. Chenartu was the scene of a successful SOF operation in December 2005 that bagged several Taliban leadership targets and demonstrated that the coalition could reach into nearly inaccessible valleys at will. A similar notion underpinned this operation. Chenartu Valley was an elongated green zone that could only be reached by air or by what amounted to an expanded goat trail. There were intelligence indicators that Shah Wali Kot district Taliban regrouped there and that other Taliban organizations from Oruzgan and Zabul used the valley as a meeting point. Operation TABER POLAD was a complex operation involving TF Orion, the Afghan National Police, and TF Knighthawks, the U.S. Army aviation unit belonging to CJTF-76.[91]

The scheme of manoeuvre had C Company air assaulting into two blocking positions, while A Company and the police searched the valley. The main challenge was adhering to TF Knighthawks' demands, which stated that their helicopter landing zones had to be secured by vehicles that had mounted weapons on them first before they would land. Clearly, this meant that there would be no surprise, so the TF Orion staff struggled to find a way to meet this criterion.

Recce Platoon and the snipers deployed south-east from FOB Martello toward their designated blocking positions. Once their RG-31s and G Wagons were in position, several CH-47 Chinooks escorted by AH-64 attack helicopters swooped in with C Company: half at the north end of the valley, and half to the south. The Sperwer TUAV orbited waiting for "squirters." A Company and the Afghan police, followed by C Company's LAV IIIs, deployed south down the Tarinkot road, and then east down the trail to the south end of the Chenartu Valley. The operation caught the enemy's early warning system by surprise and they struggled to find IED specialists to respond to the incursion.

As the Afghan police moved into its blocking positions, C Company started an exhaustive cordon and search operation in the north, while A Company worked its way from the south. There were several intelligence hits, but the Taliban insurgents who were in the valley went to ground and did not take on TF Orion. The searches turned up nothing and no enemy were identified by the intimidated population. Once again, without a significant and capable security presence, the population would not side with the government or coalition forces. After two days of operations, Operation TABER POLAD was called off. On the way out, enemy IED specialists laid devices on the extraction route but the ECM systems on the Canadian vehicles defeated all of them. This led to a variety of frustrated communications among the insurgents.

As TF Orion re-cocked from TABER POLAD, an important decision had to be made. The Gumbad Platoon House, established in the Gun Devils days and maintained by TF Orion, was increasingly problematic because of its remote location. Gumbad was a draw on Canadian resources and was difficult to resupply. Most of TF Orion's personnel and vehicle casualties up to this point were taken in its vicinity. At the same time, there was a governance presence in the new district centre. There was a small number of police and Afghan National Army troops located there. Gumbad became an example of the dilemma faced by not only TF Orion but also subsequent task force commanders; Gumbad was expensive and there was potential regarding long-term campaign objectives, but given short-term developments in Helmand and around Kandahar, was it as important? If TF Orion left the area after several months of security and governance operations, the enemy would come in and demonstrate to the population that they were now in control. Word would spread throughout the district that the coalition and government forces were weak. The facts of the situation, that there were not enough forces to go around and there were higher priorities, would be irrelevant to the local population.

As hard as it was, the decision was taken to remove Canadian Forces from Gumbad. However, TF Orion could not just walk away from a fortified platoon house. There were concerns that the enemy would occupy the facility and would use it as part of their information operations offensive – "Look, we defeated the Canadians in Gumbad. Here is their base and we occupy it!"[92] A deliberate operation to dismantle the Gumbad Platoon House had to be mounted. To provide cover for the dismantling, a Village Medical Outreach operation was conducted at the same time. Doctors, dentists, veterinarians, psychological operations operators and Afghan security forces were flown in by helicopter to assist the locals while a ground force based on C Company moved in to dismantle the base. There were no casualties, but harm was done to the long-term relationship between the government forces and the local population in Shah Wali Kot. Overall, it was the correct decision but that was cold comfort to the local population.[93]

There were longer-term ramifications to the withdrawal from Gumbad. In subsequent years, whenever Canada pulled out of a combat outpost or dismantled a platoon house, Canadian media commentators branded the move as a "retreat" and demonstrative of a loss of coalition control. This would later place pressure on the Canadian chain of command in Ottawa and force it and the forward headquarters in Afghanistan to expend valuable resources and time over-analyzing the domestic political impact of every potential tactical

re-distribution of forces. Of course, the chain of command could not explain to the media, and thereby to the enemy, that the forces were stretched thin, and they certainly could not divulge what the coalition's future priorities were going to be. The public affairs world was less than stellar in explaining these realities and ultimately the perception that Canada was constantly "retreating" took hold in the Canadian media with substantial detrimental effects over time.[94]

Although Operation MOUNTAIN THRUST was inconclusive in the Canadian area of operations, there were significant effects elsewhere. Maj Gen Freakley noted that

> We did kill several of the key enemy leaders in the south, out in Helmand Province primarily. There were ten guys we targeted out there. We killed four and drove the others out of the country. By October they were back, all six because of British inactivity. However, MOUNTAIN THRUST enabled the British and the Dutch and the Romanians to come in basically unimpeded. [this work was done by] TF Bushmaster, the fighting the Canadians and the US did…. But we did not get a lasting effect.[95]

Operation ZAHAR: The Battle of Pashmul, 7-9 July 2006

CTF Aegis and TF Orion had to deal with two problems that emerged simultaneously. In late June, there was a significant increase in insurgent activity in the Musa Qala and Kajaki districts in Helmand province. Then the security contractors at the vital Kajaki hydroelectric dam deserted. There were further indicators that security in the Sangin area was increasingly problematic. The situation produced a debate between the British commanders and the Helmand political leadership as to what the response should be. Should 3 PARA head north out of its designated operating areas around Lashkar Gah or not?[96] At the same time, TF Orion's B Company detected an insurgent build-up in Zharey district back in Kandahar province. The difference now was that there were more Taliban leaders coming in and defensive preparations were underway in the district. ISTAR indicators suggested that there was linkage between events in central Helmand and events in Zharey district. One possibility was that the Zharey force would interdict Highway 1 to prevent resupply and generate 'spectaculars' in Kandahar City, while the Helmand insurgent force would draw British forces north and then move on Lashkar Gah, the provincial capital, or take on the still-deploying British task force and defeat it as it entered the field piecemeal.[97]

Operation HEWAD ("Homeland") was a contingency plan established by CTF Aegis to address the central Helmand problem. Part of that contingency plan was called Operation AUGUSTUS, a sub-plan designed to neutralize the enemy leaders if they came together in the Sangin area to plan or parlay with local groups. TF Orion was, on its own, already working on a contingency plan to go back into Zharey district and disrupt whatever the enemy were doing: that plan was called Operation ZAHAR ("Sword"). Orion, however, had a role to play in HEWAD and AUGUSTUS, and then all activities had to be coordinated with Operation MOUNTAIN THRUST, the CJTF-76-led operation in Oruzgan province and adjacent areas. What fell out of all of this was that TF Orion would, in effect, disengage from Shah Wali Kot, go into Zharey district and disrupt the enemy there, re-cock, and then head west to Helmand to support the British operations in Sangin.

The intelligence picture for Operation ZAHAR came together on 5 July. Enemy leaders were going to meet in the Pashmul area, consolidate control of the district, and then mount a series of 'spectacular' operations against Kandahar City while interfering with movement on Highway 1. Coupled with the build-up detected by Maj Grimshaw's B Company and other resources, LCol Hope decided it was time to mount Operation ZAHAR.

Operation ZAHAR drew on all of the lessons learned so far from TF Orion operations in the province. The primary lesson was that there was an effective enemy reporting network in and around Kandahar City and it had to be 'spoofed' before the battle group could converge on the target areas. Unlike previous operations, ZAHAR would employ all three infantry companies. Again, previous operations demonstrated that surrounding a target area in constricted terrain using surprise would improve the chances of catching and destroying enemy forces.

On the night of 7 July 2006, TF Orion's infantry companies moved back and forth through Kandahar City to confuse the enemy early warning network. Right before midnight, A Company and Recce Platoon moved to Patrol Base Wilson (with a CIMIC vehicle taking fire while moving through the city), while B and C companies moved to the district centre in Bazaar-e Panjwayi in Panjwayi district. The M-777 guns were set up in positions along Highway 1. A company of Afghan National Army troops from northern Afghanistan and their American embedded trainers were split up; an Afghan platoon was assigned to each Canadian company. The Afghan police were not invited on this operation for operational security reasons. (See Figure 10-7)

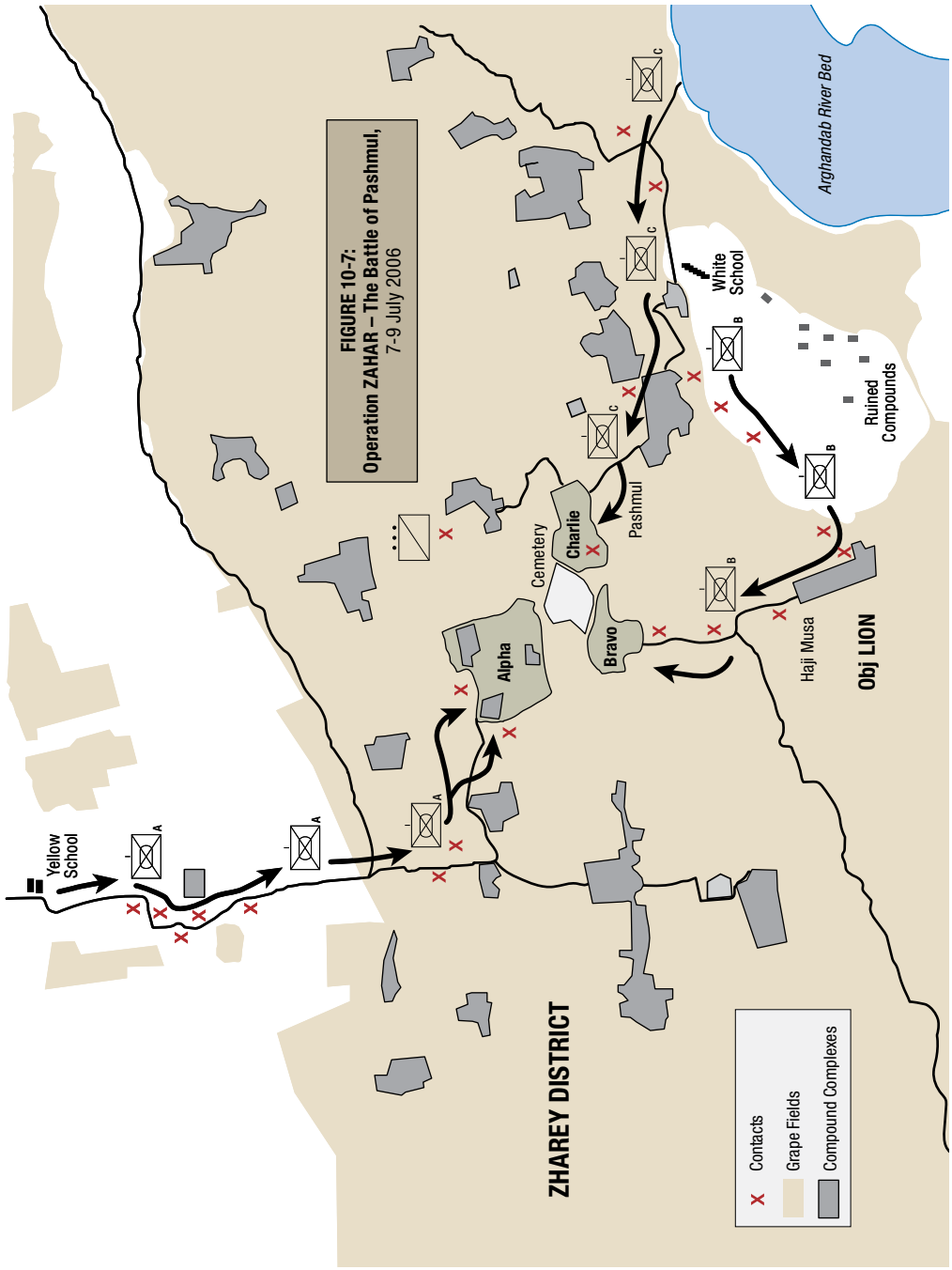


Figure 10-7: Operation ZAHAR – The Battle of Pashmul, 7-9 July 2006

TF ORION deployed at midnight. Maj Gallinger's A Company headed west down Highway 1 and abruptly turned south into the narrow lanes between the vineyard trenches. Maj Bill Fletcher's C Company crossed the Arghandab River and established a 'foot' on the ground at the crossroads short of the bazaar south of Pashmul, while Maj Grimshaw and B Company prepared to pass through C Company and head west into its blocking positions.

The firing started immediately on all fronts. A Company vehicles were shot at five minutes into the operation, as was C Company. C Company stood firm and pumped 25mm fire back from its lead LAV IIIs. A Company's column of LAV III and G Wagons moved slowly along the dark lane, turrets traversed left and right, engaging enemy RPG teams with night optics. Women and children started to stream out of the battle area. While C Company continued to fire at its targets, B Company moved west but was heavily engaged from the south and west by RPG teams and machine gun fire. As it turned out, all three companies were engaged by an enemy covering force deployed in a circle around Pashmul. The enemy attempted to send small numbers of reinforcements on motorcycles to back up the covering force but these were engaged and destroyed as they attempted to move into position. The fighting lasted all night as the companies jockeyed to get into position opposite their target areas, designated Objectives ALPHA PUMA, BRAVO PUMA and CHARLIE PUMA. Recce Platoon moved in from the north east into a blocking position and apprehended a number of enemy personnel attempting to escape the onslaught.

At first light, the three companies with their accompanying Afghan troops dismounted and advanced toward the objective areas. All three came under machine gun fire, while C Company was hit with indirect fire from mortars and RPGs as well. The close quarters fighting saw RPGs being employed by both sides at minimum ranges. The interlocked compounds coupled with the extreme heat kept progress slow. Then the enemy counterattacked, trying to exploit a seam between B Company's platoons, a move that surprised the Canadian leadership and was a further indicator of an enhanced enemy tactical capacity. The fighting on all objective areas continued well into the morning, with A Battery's M-777 guns, U.S. Army AH-64 attack helicopters and U.S. Air Force A-10 fighter-bombers brought in for support.

During the course of the action, Cpl Anthony Boneca, a reservist from the Lake Superior Scottish Regiment was shot and killed during C Company's assault on a compound. An MQ-1 Predator UAV from the U.S. Air Force's 62nd Expeditionary Reconnaissance Flight was brought in and dropped a Hellfire missile on the structure, which ignited ammunition and burned the building. This was the first instance of a Canadian joint terminal attack controller guiding an AGM-114 Hellfire released from a UAV – and it

would not be the last. In A Company's area, small teams of insurgents tried to flank the main assault and interfere with water resupply or otherwise generate disruption to slow down the momentum of the assault. These moves were countered by the company headquarters and resupply continued.

Combat engineers slowly cleared the compounds throughout the day. Maj Trevor Webb's combat engineers uncovered IED-making material and abandoned enemy command posts. Enemy personnel, fragmented and killed by various Canadian weapons systems, were discovered throughout the battle area and attempts were made through CIMIC local engagement to dispose of the remains in a culturally appropriate fashion. ISTAR assets attempted to track where the enemy were so they could be re-engaged. Indicators suggested that a number of them escaped to Objective LION, the village of Haji Musa southwest of Pashmul. Plans were made to converge on Haji Musa the next morning. At the same time, there were clearer indicators that some enemy were able to exfiltrate west before the cordon could be completely put in. Unfortunately, TF Orion's ability to pursue given the constricted terrain was minimal. A sweep into Haji Musa following a PSYOPS mission turned up enemy equipment and medical supplies, but the insurgents had already departed. There was no further contact that day.

While TF Orion engaged the enemy in Pashmul, the Governor of Kandahar and various police units in the city raided numerous mosques that were suspected of supporting the insurgency; 156 people were detained, of which 50 remained in custody. The combination of ZAHAR and the mosque raids completely disrupted enemy plans for their Tet-like operation. Indeed, one estimate suggested that three or four enemy leaders were taken out of action by Operation ZAHAR. Two of these were wounded, exfiltrated, and later died elsewhere. Note that these leaders were brought in to replace earlier losses, specifically from the Baqi Network, and probably included IED specialists. B Company, after the operation, queried its local sources and concluded that there were 200 enemy insurgents present between Pashmul and Siah Choy to the west. When all was said and done, approximately 50 were killed or later died of their wounds. A Company apparently clipped the close protection party of an enemy leader on the way in and he departed the combat area, rendering him ineffective and his bodyguards dead.[98]

Operation ZAHAR was the first successful operation that seriously disrupted the enemy build-up west of Kandahar City and it bought the coalition time to deal with the deteriorating situation in Helmand province. Operation ZAHAR was also the first instance where the whole Canadian battle group was brought together and engaged in a singular combat operation: a significant night action in complex terrain.

Photo Credit: Author

Operation ZAHAR (7-9 July 2006) was the first Canadian major combat operation conducted involving the entire battle group. It was mounted at night in complex terrain against defended positions. A Company 1 PPCLI deploys from its vehicles and comes under fire from Objective ALPHA PUMA.

Photo Credit: Author

LAV IIIs pour 25mm fire onto Objective ALPHA PUMA.

Photo Credit: Author

A Company vehicles fire on an enemy flanking move.

Photo Credit: Author

Canadian infantry advances to flush out the insurgents.

Photo Credit: Author

C and A Companies move to clear Haji Musa the next day.

Photo Credit: Author

A Hellfire missile launched by an MQ-1 Predator kills the insurgents that mortally wounded Corporal Tony Boneca from C Company 1 PPCLI during Operation ZAHAR.

Operation AUGUSTUS: Into the Sangin Valley

While TF Orion was conducting Operation ZAHAR, a series of developments in Helmand province fed into what would become Operation AUGUSTUS. As part of Operation MOUNTAIN THRUST, American special operations TF Bushmaster moved into northern Helmand province, getting the enemy to move and disrupting their operations there and in western Oruzgan province. The logistics support element for TF Bushmaster, situated north of the Kajaki Dam, was ambushed. Then a Tier I SOF raid intended to take out enemy leadership in the Sangin area went wrong, resulting in the loss of an MH-47 helicopter. At the same time, a British infantry company from 3 PARA got pinned into the Sangin district centre by insurgent forces in the city. The combination of these events meant that original British reconstruction operations in south-central Helmand had to be suspended.[99]

Adjustments were made to the original HEWAD plan. The air assault against enemy leadership targets north of Sangin, Operation AUGUSTUS, would occur simultaneously with a relief operation to the Sangin district centre. TF Bushmaster, which had been in the field for a protracted period and was needed for the next in the MOUNTAIN series of operations to be held in Regional Command (East), had to pass through the Sangin operating area, be escorted down to and along Highway 1, and from there it would return to Regional Command (East). CTF Aegis planners had to make sure all of this happened as smoothly as possible. 3 PARA, an airmobile force equipped with limited ground mobility, would be unable to handle all of these moving parts. As a result, TF Orion, augmented with an American Hummer-mounted infantry company from TF Warrior, 1-2 Infantry in Zabul, was brought in.

What did all of this mean in the bigger picture? To prevent a collapse of the coalition position in Helmand, CTF Aegis had to strip Kandahar and Zabul provinces of the bulk of their 'kinetic' task forces and redeploy them to central Helmand. In the original campaign plan, those task forces were originally supposed to escort and support their respective PRTs in their development, reconstruction and governance activities, and to help with mentoring the Afghan security forces. Almost all of those activities had to be suspended in all three provinces. TF Orion was also scheduled to take over from the French SOF down in Spin Boldak. That also had to be put on hold (the French eventually departed without conducting a proper handover to TF Orion, leaving a vacuum in this critical district).

The outline plan had TF Orion establishing blocks to the east and south of the AUGUSTUS target area. (See Figure 10-8)

FIGURE 10-8:
Operation AUGUSTUS – Helmand Province,
12-17 July 2006

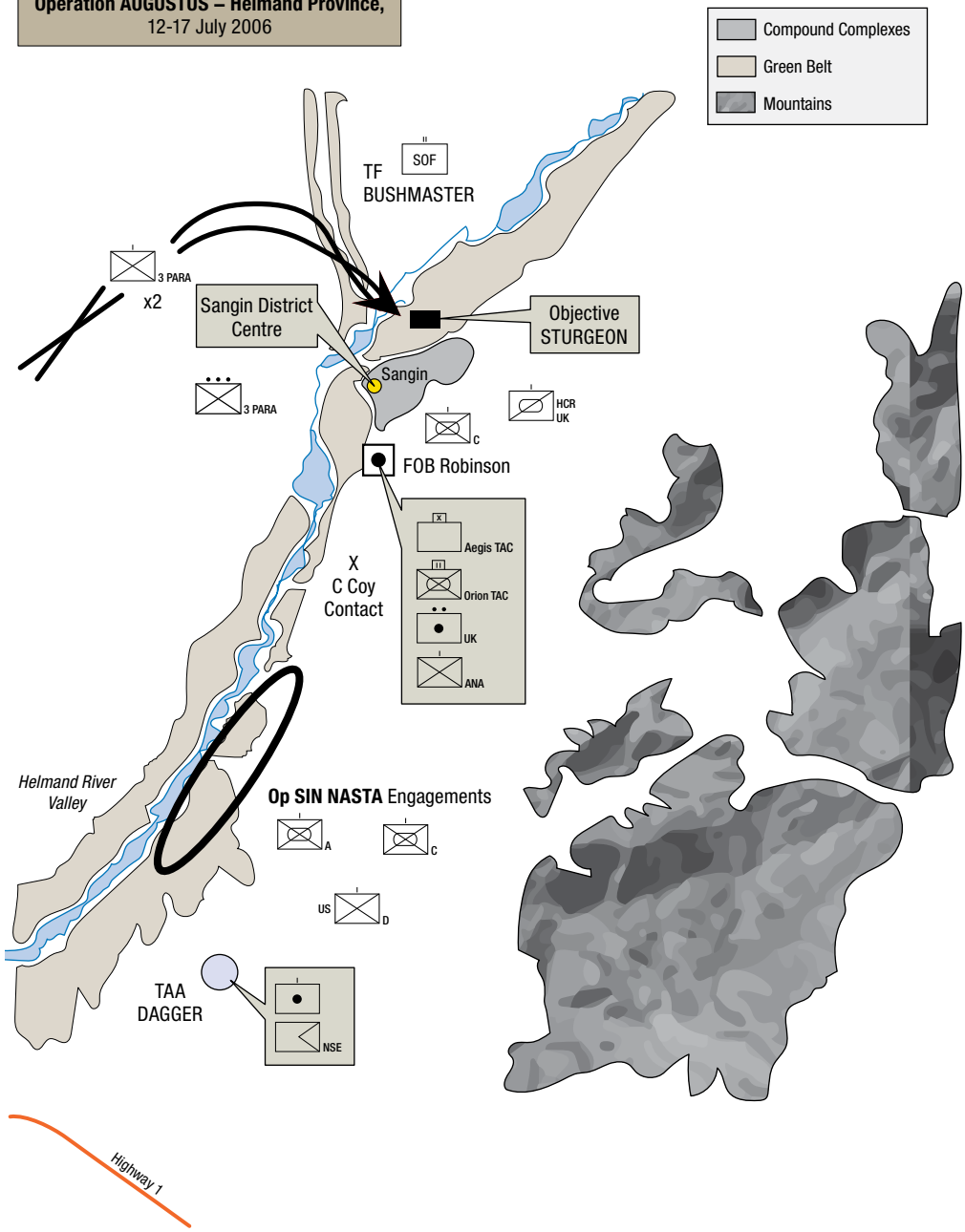


Figure 10-8: Operation AUGUSTUS – Helmand Province, 12-17 July 2006

TF Bushmaster would handle the northern blocks. 3 PARA would air assault into the target area, and then a Canadian infantry company would shift to relieve the Sangin district centre. TF Orion would then cover TF Bushmaster as it re-deployed to eastern Afghanistan. Afghan security forces participation would be negligible as the Afghan National Army and Afghan police would not release forces from elsewhere in Afghanistan for operations in the south. This was unfortunate. A key part of the plan was a sub-plan called RANA led by the CTF Aegis Political Advisor, Pam Isfeld, which envisioned a 'super shura' led by the Afghan PTS amnesty coordinator, the legendary Dr. Mojadedi. The idea was to shift the Sangin population's loyalty toward the government and 'reconcile' insurgents in the Sangin region. All in all, the Helmand operation became a multinational, brigade-sized operation involving significant elements from four separate battle groups plus most of their associated combat service and fire support, led by the Canadian-commanded CTF Aegis. This was a significant milestone, but produced additional pressures on CTF Aegis HQ.

The initial moves for Operations HEWAD/AUGUSTUS were shrouded by a dust event on 12 July 2006, which altered the timelines. LCol Hope used the dust storm as cover and was able to infiltrate the bulk of TF Orion undetected into central Helmand and without incident. AUGUSTUS was put on hold, so TF Orion mounted a series of disruption operations from tactical assembly area DAGGER designed to keep the insurgents guessing as to where TF Orion would go next.

Photo Credit: Author

Using a sand storm to mask its movements, the entire battle group deployed virtually undetected to Tactical Assembly Area DAGGER in Helmand prior to Operation AUGUSTUS. AUGUSTUS was designed to trap and eliminate the insurgent leadership in central Helmand Province. 1 PPCLI conducted several raids from this TAA, thus disrupting enemy operations south of Sangin.

There were several significant encounters with insurgent forces in the Hyderabad area, collectively referred to as Operation SIN NASTA. A Company crossed the Helmand River into the western Green Belt on several occasions to disrupt and C Company raided compounds suspected of housing enemy leadership to the east of TAA DAGGER. The American company from TF Warrior worked the Pasab area, conducting similar operations. SIN NASTA generated numerous enemy casualties, personnel that would have been employed against FOB Robinson and Sangin if they had been left unmolested. During one of these forays, TF Orion's Recce Platoon took a casualty and medic Private Jason Lamont, without cover fire, dashed across an open field to administer first aid. He was awarded the Medal of Military Valour. At this point, CTF Aegis' mobile headquarters, callsign 99, moved through TF Orion and set up in FOB Robinson in Sangin. It was promptly mortared the evening of its arrival, but the British 105mm guns based at the forward operating base responded, hitting the baseplate and the fire stopped.

Photo Credit: Author

LCol Ian Hope and BGen David Fraser plot their next moves at Tactical Assembly Area DAGGER in Helmand on 12 July 2006 prior to moving on to Sangin. 48 hours later, TF Orion was forced to turn around and head south to Nawa and Garmsir districts and retake a pair of captured district centres. These operations in Helmand prevented the complete collapse of government control in critical areas.

Intelligence indicators pointed toward a built-up area designated STURGEON east of Sangin as the most likely area for insurgent leadership to meet. On the night of 15 July 2006, covered by B-1Bs, A-10s and MQ-1 Predator UAVs, British CH-47 Chinooks escorted by AH-64 Longbow Apaches made their way from Camp Bastion and conducted an air assault into Objective STURGEON. TF Bushmaster was blocking to the north, while C Company with an Afghan platoon and a British Scimitar light tank squadron from the Household Cavalry screened to the south. The RAF Chinooks took some fire on the way in

but eventually had the company from 3 PARA on the ground and the searches commenced. C Company got hung up on a water obstacle after a culvert collapsed but the vehicles that were able to cross continued on.

The presence of a LAV III Company, ISTAR reportage indicated, deterred the enemy from sending in truck-mounted reinforcements. As it turned out, the 3 PARA Company came up with nothing. The enemy leadership targets pulled out at some point and were not present in Objective STURGEON. Speculation was that they were warned by agents in the governor's office. Two bodies and four wounded civilians were found but these casualties were generated by an MQ-1 Hellfire strike that was not associated with Operation AUGUSTUS. The frustrated Paras called in the Chinooks and departed for their base, leaving C Company alone on Objective STURGEON to prepare to enter the built-up area of Sangin and relieve the besieged Paras in the district centre. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, a B-1B dropped several precision-guided munitions on a compound south of FOB Robinson. CJTF-76 now instructed CTF Aegis to conduct a sensitive site exploitation of that site.

Part of C Company was diverted to the strike site where they encountered a volley of RPGs and a substantial number of enemy prepared to fight to cover the withdrawal of whatever leadership targets had been in the compound complex. After killing about 50 insurgents with their 25mm cannons, the decision was made to re-vector C Company back into Sangin. Canadian M-777s fired on several insurgent build-ups on the west side of the river as C Company made its way into the city to relieve the district centre garrison. Dr. Mojadedi was then flown in but the 'super shura' was poorly attended and its effects were, unfortunately, limited.

A Pathfinder patrol from 3 PARA then stumbled across the escaped enemy leadership targets that were hiding in a mosque. These men had survived a Tier I SOF strike, dodged the Operation AUGUSTUS forces in Objective STURGEON, and had survived a B-1B unloading JDAMS on their compound. They were the heart of the insurgency in Helmand province at that time. The Pathfinders frantically tried to get CTF Aegis to bring in an airstrike. The staff worked through every possible option but rules of engagement established and enforced by CENTCOM prohibited an airstrike on a mosque. The enemy leaders slipped away once again to cause untold levels of violence and disruption over the following years.

The situation as it stood was this: TF Bushmaster, located north of Sangin, was at the limit of its logistical endurance, and had to return to Regional Command (East) to refit for the next 'Mountain' series operation. B Company TF Orion was keeping an eye on things in Zharey district back in Kandahar and reports started to come in that the enemy had flowed back into the Pashmul area. A and C Companies, TF Orion, plus the TF Warrior Company from Zabul that was accompanying it were moving toward Tactical Assembly Area DAGGER on Route 611 in Helmand. 3 PARA was consolidating the

Sangin district centre and its various platoon houses, and had their air assault company back at Camp Bastion. The Dutch continued to deploy into Oruzgan province. BGen Fraser's 99 TAC had already packed up and was returning to KAF. Another drama, however, was about to unfold.

Operation CAUCHEMAR: Retaking Garmsir and Nawa

On the night of 17 July 2006, the staff at CJTF-76 alerted the CTF Aegis Joint Operations Centre that two district centres in southern Helmand province, Garmsir and Nawa, were under attack. President Karzai was on the phone and demanded that coalition forces retake the two facilities. One view was that the district centres were symbols of governance; this was a direct challenge to the authority of the Karzai administration, and the situation had to be dealt with promptly or the Kabul government would lose face. The more sober view was that these two attacks were in exactly the opposite direction, not to mention some distance, from Sangin; they were probably designed to draw off CTF Aegis forces from the north and thus relieve pressure on the insurgent leadership that was pinned down somewhere around Sangin. The political pressure was immense so CTF Aegis planners led by LCol Shane Schreiber and Lt Col Mark Brewer crafted an immediate response for BGen Fraser's approval.[100] (See Figure 10-9)

The situation as it stood that night highlighted CTF Aegis's plight. As previously stated, there were four battle groups for four provinces. There were virtually no Afghan National Army forces and the police were little more than unreliable re-uniformed militias. Operation AUGUSTUS drew TF Orion out of Kandahar province, and a significant part of TF Warrior out of Zabul province. The Dutch task force was in the process of deploying and would not mount operations in a piecemeal fashion. The Romanians were responsible for the security of KAF. The British forces in Helmand lacked ground mobility and were dependent on a relatively small number of helicopters. TF Bushmaster, which did not belong to CTF Aegis, had returned to Regional Command (East). The bulk of CTF Aegis was committed to Helmand, which left the other three provinces vulnerable – and seriously reduced their ability to conduct PRT operations because their protective forces were gone.

The only force that could react in a timely fashion to these attacks was TF Orion. TF Orion was mounted in LAV III and had the proven capability to deploy anywhere in Regional Command (South)'s area of operations. It had a mobile logistics capability and the means to operate TUAV at long range using its mobile ground link. The issue was: where, exactly, were Garmsir and Nawa? TF Orion and the Canadian force had a very limited ability to move map data or other imagery and was mostly limited to voice communications or maps dropped off by helicopter. Even if TUAV could find the two sites, it had to send its camera feed back to KAF to the TF Orion Tactical Operations Centre who would have

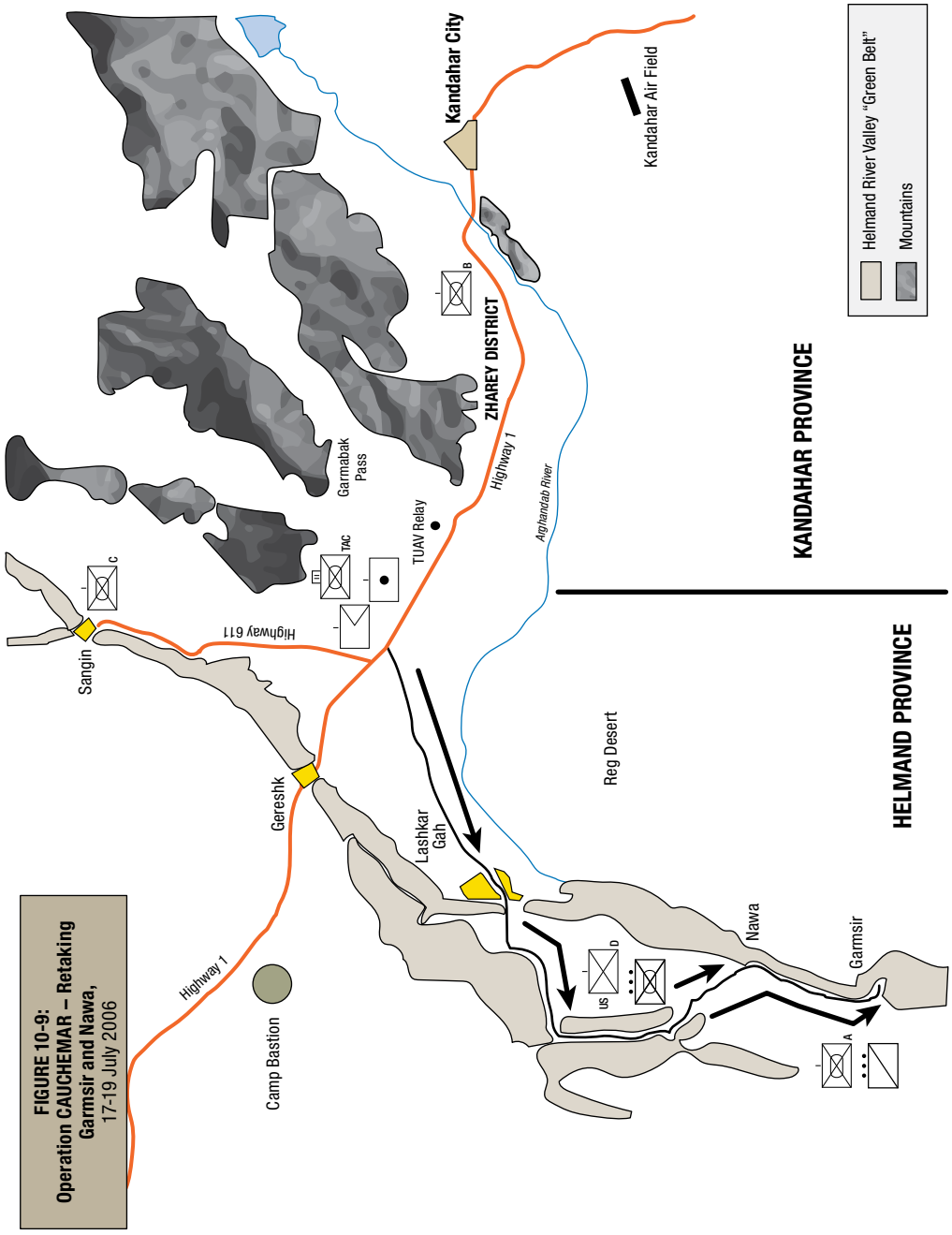


Figure 10-9: Operation CAUCHEMAR – Retaking Garmsir and Nawa, 17-19 July 2006

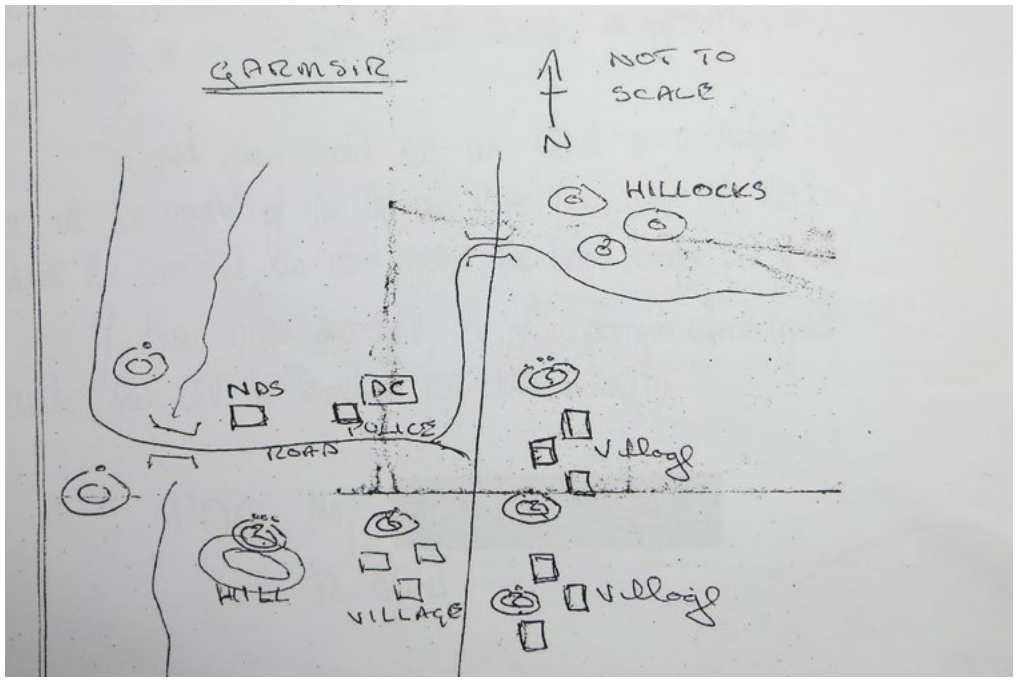


Photo Credit: Author, from Major Kirk Gallinger

This sketch was the only geographical information that A Company had to work with for the assault to retake the Garmsir district centre in Helmand province during Operation CAUCHEMAR in July 2006.

to print out the information, and then call TF Orion on the radio to arrange for a drop-off by helicopter, which Canada did not own. There was no means at this point in the conflict to move real time imagery from TUAV to a terminal in the field commander's vehicle.

The TF Warrior Company with TF Orion, however, was mounted in up-armoured Hummers and lacked long-range firepower – but unlike TF Orion, they were equipped with Blue Force Tracker and FalconView and thus had the ability to move data to their vehicles from higher headquarters using an Internet relay chat system. These systems had been in use by the U.S. Army since at least 2003. LCol Hope was able to get MQ-1 Predator imagery and FalconView map data from TF Warrior in order to plan what became known as Operation CAUCHEMAR. A jpeg sketch was made available to the company commanders.[101]

This was an extremely risky operation not just for TF Orion but CTF Aegis, which had the bulk of its combat power committed to Helmand province from three other provinces. Garmsir and Nawa were south of the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah. Lashkar Gah was an urban environment with no bypass road. That was not all. TF Orion would have to cross the Helmand River at Lashkar Gah, head west then south, and then enter a Green Belt that consisted of not one but several irrigation systems, that crisscrossed the whole area – innumerable culverts, bridges and fords, and thus presented innumerable potential IED opportunities.

Nawa was on the west side of the river – that was good. But Garmsir was east of the river. TF Orion would have to conduct an assault crossing to get into the town. And then there was the logistics trail for all of this. LCol John Conrad's NSE had to be able to support this from KAF: beans, bullets and gas. TF Orion was now operating at the end of its rope. Without helicopters, everything had to go by road – "jingle" trucks and barely armoured 14-tonne transports. The need for imagery rather than maps was readily apparent – maps labeling the Green Belt as "numerous ditches" were less than helpful.

A Company and the TF Warrior company refueled and re-ammunitioned at an NSE logistics leaguer on Highway 1, while LCol Hope and his staff planned the next moves on 18 July. Maj Gallinger would move and retake Garmsir. C Company was still engaged in Sangin, so Devil Company from 1-2 Infantry was tasked with re-taking Nawa. A LAV III platoon was detached to them to provide longer-range firepower as the American company was mounted in Hummers. Capt Jon Hamilton's Recce Platoon, a joint terminal attack controller, and an Afghan National Army platoon with American embedded trainers joined A Company. Maj Steve Gallagher's M-777s arrived as well.

The force deployed as soon as it was ready on 18 July 2006. There was supposed to be a link-up with the Helmand police in Lashkar Gah, but no one arrived at the rendezvous, so TF Orion pressed on west across the river and south into the Green Belt. There was no contact along the canals and compounds. Devil Company and the Canadian LAV III platoon cleaved off and headed for Nawa, while A Company continued south.

Nawa, as it turned out, was virtually empty. A Company approached Garmsir, however, with the LAV III platoons in an extended line. The insurgents, who had been alerted to TF ORION's movements by spotters using mirrors, opened fire with a combination of machine guns, RPG and mortars. The LAV IIIs opened up with 25mm fire as the joint terminal attack controllers called in A-10 fighter-bombers and JDAMS. A Company's troops even broke out 60mm mortars and started lobbing rounds back. This firefight lasted until darkness fell. There was an estimated company-sized enemy force in a built-up area, and the only way to get at them was cross the only bridge in the area. Maj Gallinger decided discretion was the better part of valour and chose to wait until morning so that Maj Webb's combat engineers could clear the bridge of demolitions. That night, 2 Platoon engaged and destroyed an enemy patrol that crossed the river.[102]

At first light, the engineers and 3 Platoon cleared the bridge and set 2 Platoon and Recce Platoon across into Garmsir. There was no resistance and no shooting. A block-by-block search commenced but Garmsir was deserted. Blood trails and large numbers of body parts were found, enough to estimate that there were about two platoons of insurgents present during the night. Several large caches of ammunition, including large RPG caches, were found as well as a number of IED factories. ISTAR reportage indicated that several

insurgent leaders had gone to ground in the local population. TF Orion had moved so quickly that the insurgents were unable to prepare a proper defence of the town in time. To ensure that the enemy remained off-balance, TF Orion maintained constant patrols and probes in the surrounding areas for several days afterwards.

Columns of Afghan police and 3 PARA soldiers eventually arrived in each town to reconstruct the district centres and police stations, as information operations personnel touted the victory at Garmsir in the various media. The Afghan National Army and their embedded trainers were ordered to stay in Garmsir so TF Orion mounted up and headed back to Highway 1 and home to Kandahar. The NSE packed up its mobile logistics leaguer near Highway 611 and headed east. As the columns wound their way into Kandahar City, a suicide vehicle-borne IED struck an NSE Bison. Cpl Francisco Gomez and Cpl Jason Warren were killed in the attack.

Operation CAUCHEMAR achieved its objectives in that two burning buildings in remote districts were retaken and the Karzai government's 'face' was restored, but at the expense of two Canadians killed. LCol Hope's decision to leave C Company up north in Helmand ensured that not all coalition forces were refocused on the feint. This meant that the insurgent leadership in Helmand did not regain freedom of movement in Sangin as it hoped to, thus introducing friction into their plans. At the same time, however, the whole Helmand adventure reduced the focus at CTF Aegis and CJTF-76 away from insurgent activities in Kandahar province, specifically Zharey district.

On 1 August 2006, CJTF-76 and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM transferred authority over CTF Aegis and its forces to the NATO-led ISAF. TF Orion and the other organizations in CTF Aegis were now part of ISAF. Stage III expansion was then complete and a major strategic objective in the war in Afghanistan was achieved. The international coalitions were, on the face of it, one step closer to unity of command. On the other side of the Durand Line, the Quetta Shura quietly announced it was taking, in Canadian terms, an 'operational pause.'[103]

Operation BRAVO CORRIDOR and the Second Battle of Pashmul, 3 August 2006[104]

While CTF Aegis and TF Orion were manoeuvring around Helmand, B Company was holding down the fort in Kandahar City while keeping Highway 1 west of the city open for supporting movements. During that time, Maj Grimshaw, Capt Jay Adair and the B Company staff; Maj Erik Liebert at the PRT; Maj Harjit Sajjan; and Capt Walter Jull from 2 (EW) Squadron were all, in their various ways and means, keeping an eye on developments in Zharey district. They independently arrived at the conclusion that the insurgents were, to various degrees, reconstituting in the eastern part of the district.

The rest of TF Orion and the NSE returned from Helmand to refit: A Company went back north to FOB Martello, while C Company prepared to move in and fill the void left by the French SOF in Spin Boldak. All TF Orion elements now could see their redeployment home to Canada on the horizon. The relief in place with 1st Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment (1 RCR) would occur in the next few weeks.[105]

However, the violence level along Highway 1 significantly increased in the waning days of July. There was daily contact between B Company and the insurgents; this even included complex ambushes, one of which was nearly two kilometres long. Some new form of directional IED was in use and no one had seen one like it before. This surge in enemy activity was troublesome to CTF Aegis, as the British were pouring troops into Afghanistan and firing them out the door from KAF, through the city and along Highway 1 heading west to Helmand. Operation BRAVO CORRIDOR was prepared by TF Orion to disrupt enemy activity in Zharey district along Highway 1 and push down to Pashmul, if possible. BRAVO CORRIDOR was activated on 1 and 2 August with two platoons from B Company and a platoon from C Company. There were not enough forces to keep the road open and move to Pashmul with the impending relief in place, so the focus became the highway instead of Pashmul as the British deployment through the area was deemed a priority.

While BRAVO CORRIDOR was underway, however, additional pressures developed on TF Orion. LCol Hope was in contact with Governor Asadullah Khalid. Khalid was concerned that the grape harvest season was imminent and there were large numbers of displaced locals that had to get back into Zharey so they could tend to the crops. Landowners were exerting significant political pressure on Khalid. Everything possible had to be done to drive the insurgents out of Zharey so the people could return. Information then came in from police sources that enemy leadership, perhaps senior leadership, would meet once again in the Pashmul area and prepare for further operations against Kandahar City. There was additional information that appeared to confirm that such a meeting was a real possibility. This combination of pressures led to altering BRAVO CORRIDOR beyond its original parameters while it was in progress.[106]

LCol Hope looked at the situation. The problem of Zharey district was not going to go away. Ideally, he wanted to conduct a relief in place with 1 RCR in Pashmul itself, if he could get TF Orion in there. That would keep the enemy off balance and away from an area they wanted to control. There were far too many convergent aspects of the operational, political and tactical situation at this point in time for a commander to walk away from the area. There was, however, divergent opinion on what was going on in Pashmul:

> Some believed that the information from the police was faulty at best, a trap at worst. They noted the defensive preparations that had been taking place over the past couple of weeks, the response by the enemy from the manoeuvre to collect near Ma'Sum Ghar and believed that the enemy was just waiting for TF Orion to make another go at Pashmul from the south. Elements in the intelligence world, ones that were hostile to TF Orion's independent intelligence collection efforts, sided with this view. Another intelligence organization not related to Aegis or Orion concurred. Others disagreed. They believed that the enemy was so disrupted with the goings on in Helmand and in Zharey that they would move away from any force coming in to avoid a fight, flow west, wait for the coalition forces to leave, and then flow back in. There were attempts to take the matter up a level to CTF Aegis and get the headquarters to postpone the operation…. Eventually, [BGen] Fraser, who was in Kabul, came back to Kandahar, took a look at the arguments, and approved the operation.[107]

TF Orion was spread thin; FOB Martello in the north was facilitating the Dutch deployment to Oruzgan, C Company was partially deployed to Spin Boldak and B Company was in Patrol Base Wilson holding Highway 1 open. There were also other significant changes. The transfer of authority from Operation ENDURING FREEDOM to ISAF meant that the command relationships between the Afghan National Army and their embedded trainers and CTF Aegis were now non-existent. The 209 Corps forces from northern Afghanistan headed home. More importantly, American intelligence and special operations forces enablers that were part of the Operation ENDURING FREEDOM structure were now no longer accessible to CTF Aegis in either the quantity or availability that they had been. American route clearance packages, critical for clearing IEDs, were redeployed for American operations elsewhere in Regional Command (East).

The TF Orion plan envisioned a pincer movement on Pashmul. B Company would move in from the north, while a composite company made up of platoons from C and A Companies plus Recce Platoon would cross the Arghandab River from Bazaar-e Panjwayi from the south and link up in Pashmul. There were no Afghan National Army forces, so Afghan National Police were acquired from various sources. The Canadian M-777 guns were made ready and the Sperwer TUAV, now the only full motion video surveillance asset available, was launched (though eventually some MQ-1 Predators became available).

After a series of deception moves, TF Orion's forces deployed. The southern and northern forces launched at 0400 hours 3 August 2006. (See Figure 10-10)

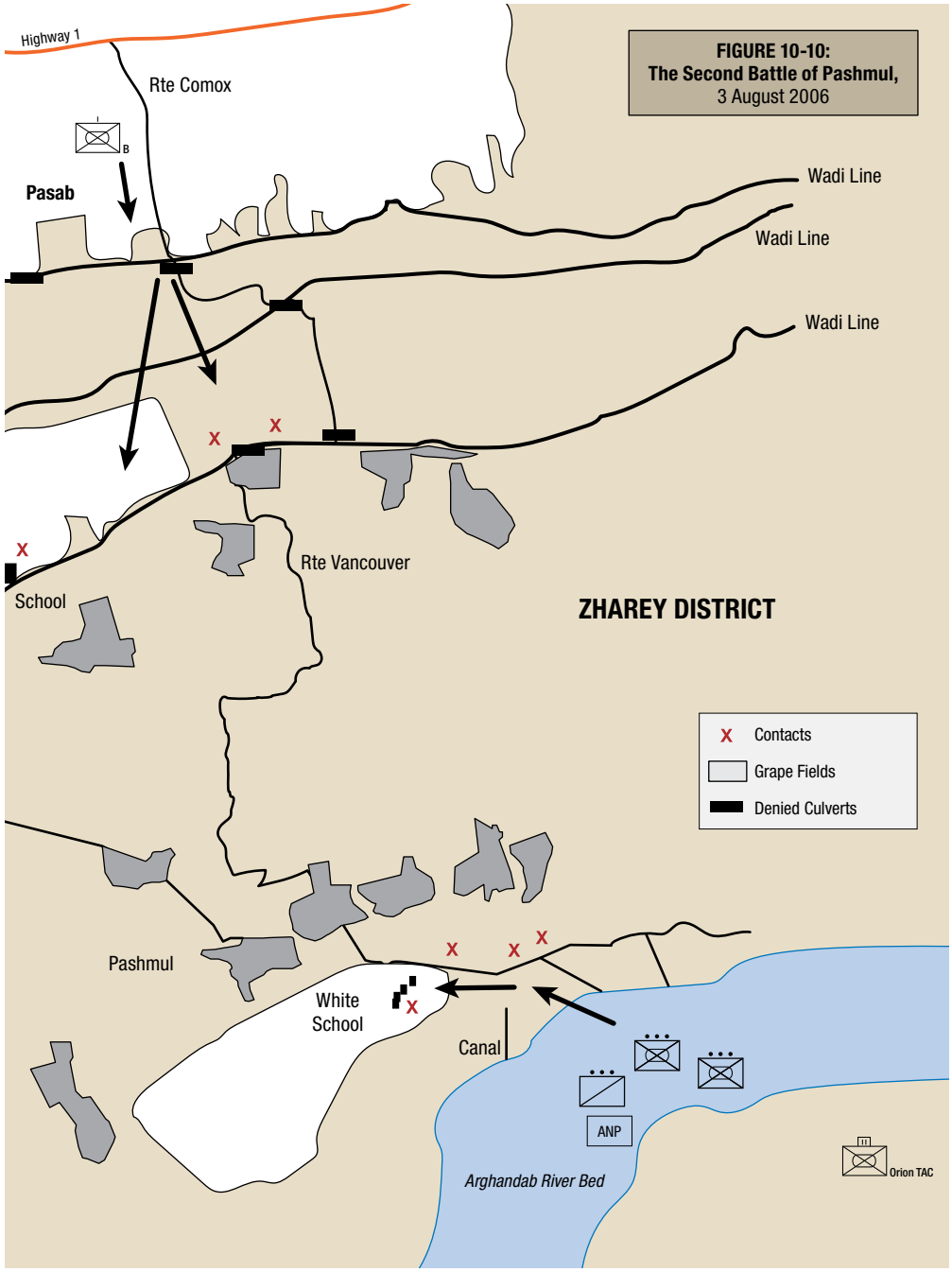


Figure 10-10: The Second Battle of Pashmul, 3 August 2006

At 0405, 9 Platoon from C Company with about 30 Afghan police officers in tow engaged the enemy early warning system as the LAV IIIs crossed the Arghandab River, drove up the ford and approached the crossroads east of the White School and the Pashmul Bazaar. Ten minutes later, a LAV III struck an IED, disabling the vehicle, killing Cpl Chris Reid and wounding WO Shaun Petersen, the platoon leader. This was followed by a high volume of fire from insurgent positions near the crossroads directed at the vehicles. To the north, B Company sent its first LAV III over the wadi line on a small culvert bridge near Pasab. The insurgents detonated the culvert, trapping the LAV III and its crew. B Company realized, once it deployed, that all of the ways and means they usually used to cross the wadi lines in eastern Zharey had been either removed or otherwise rendered impassable by the enemy. A high volume of enemy fire also greeted B Company.[108]

Intelligence passed to TF Orion from the Mobile Electronic Warfare Team then indicated that a major insurgent leader, Haji Lala, was trapped in the White School near the Pashmul Bazaar. LCol Hope ordered his forces forward, with the Afghan National Police in the lead, in a bid to apprehend Lala. A second LAV III that was manoeuvring at this time struck a pressure-plate IED and was disabled. Recce Platoon was ordered to lay down fire to the north of the crossroads to give the stricken LAV space so the wounded could be extracted and the vehicles recovered, and then swing west and head for the White School. LCol Hope called CTF Aegis and requested an artillery show of force from the M-777 guns behind the school to discourage whoever was in it from leaving.

This request was denied. It was only then that TF Orion realized that the rules of engagement under ISAF, as opposed to Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, were much more restrictive. Inexplicably, a Canadian staff officer added even more restrictions approximating peace-time danger radii, and this essentially prohibited any artillery engagement near any structure whatsoever. Such rules of engagements were clearly unrealistic in a built-up environment.

CTF Aegis then asked the Dutch to send in their AH-64 Apache attack helicopters to provide support. In northern Pashmul, as in the south, B Company had no route clearance package. When the enemy detonated the culvert, combat engineers probed forward the old-fashioned way with metal detectors and prods. B Company was stalled until someone could figure a way across the wadi and irrigation systems. The engineers went back to Patrol Base Wilson and grabbed every piece of wood or other item that could be dumped into the ditches to get the LAV IIIs and G Wagons across.

At 1130 hours, with the August heat climbing and climbing, dismounted elements from 9 Platoon, Recce Platoon, and the Afghan police advanced to clear the White School, with a pair of Dutch AH-64s orbiting high up over Pashmul. The insurgents reported on their communications means: "Thank God they are finally here!" and unleashed fusillade after

fusillade of fire on the Afghan and Canadian forces, followed by mortars. 9 Platoon fired back but the Afghan police broke and ran. The Dutch Apaches tried to engage with their automatic cannon but because of their national rules of engagement, they were too high up to be effective.

Meanwhile, the TF Orion reserve arrived in Bazaar-e Panjwayi. LCol John Conrad deployed a mobile recovery column (low-bed trailers and Bison recovery vehicles as there were no LAV III recovery vehicles in existence), EOD resources and Capt Hugh Atwell's 7 Platoon. A QRF platoon, 1 Platoon led by Lt Ben Richard also arrived. Capt Kevin Barry took over and moved forces to secure a security bubble around the stricken LAV IIIs so they and their crews could be extracted.

Around 1230, the platoon-sized Canadian force approached the White School, and they were engaged by approximately 60 enemy insurgents from three sides: north, west and south. Capt Jon Hamilton and the platoon went to ground in the school's outbuildings and fired back. Then another enemy force opened up on the LAV III recovery site, pinning down the forces so they became focused on the new threat and not on what was happening with the manoeuvring platoon. LCol Hope requested artillery support to cover the platoon in the school. This support was once again denied by CTF Aegis. The Dutch AH-64s would not fire weapons below their rules of engagement-fixed altitude and were unable to provide any fire support either.

Ten minutes after fire support was denied, a volley of RPG rounds struck the outbuildings, killing Sgt Vaughan Ingram, Cpl Bryce Keller, and Pte Kevin Dallaire. Six others, including Recce Platoon leader Capt Hamilton, were seriously wounded. Many of the others were suffering from the effects of the extreme heat by this time.

Meanwhile, B Company's 4 and 5 Platoons were engaged in a major firefight east of the other White School near Pasab.[109] Maj Grimshaw tried to get artillery support against the enemy located near the school, but there was confusion in the fire support coordination elements over this school and the Pashmul school, in addition to the rules of engagement issue. There were continual struggles between LCol Hope, Maj Gallagher, and CTF Aegis on how to get fire support to both the northern and southern fronts during the fight.

The extraction of the wounded in the Pashmul school was paramount. The Taliban fighters were emboldened enough by the situation to start streaming into the school from the west. LCol Hope was able to get acquiescence on an M-777 shoot against the enemy forces surrounding the Pashmul school from Maj Gallagher. Hope knew that the route between the strike site and the school was probably strewn with IEDs, but there was now no choice. MCpl Matthew "Kiwi" Parsons, a LAV III driver, understanding the potential lethality of the situation, volunteered to take his LAV III in and conduct an extraction. MCpl Tony Perry in another LAV III prepared to follow in MCpl Parson's wheel tracks; if Parsons LAV III hit an IED, Perry would continue on to the besieged wounded. Lt Ben Richard's platoon linked up and prepared to cover the two LAV IIIs.

Then, in an unexpected manoeuvre, a huge USAF B-1B strategic bomber conducted a low-level show of force pass down the Arghandab River, the four engines kicking up what little water there was and shaking up Pashmul. At 1300, the first artillery round finally landed on the enemy forces near the Pashmul bazaar. Enemy fire slackened. With MCpl Parsons in the lead, the extraction force moved out across the open field and backed up to the outbuildings, ramps down. The dead and wounded were loaded up under a heavy volume of fire while a small team of soldiers led by Sgt Patrick Tower fired back with everything they had to cover them, including their dead comrades' weapons. Sgt Tower was awarded the Star of Military Valour for his actions. Sergeant William MacDonald who assisted his wounded comrades while exposing himself to fire during this action, was also awarded the Star of Military Valour.

As U.S. Army UH-60s medical evacuation helicopters landed at the casualty collection point TF Orion established in the river bed, a civilian vehicle slowly drove into Bazaar-e Panjwayi from the east. Lt Doug Thorlakson, the NSE Transport Platoon commander who was commanding the mobile recovery column staged on the road, had a bad feeling. The car's driver gunned the engine in place. Thorlakson opened up with his Bison-mounted C-6 machine gun, walking rounds toward what was evidently a suicide vehicle-borne IED. The bomber was hit but was able to detonate his vehicle. The blast wounded two Canadian soldiers from the NSE and killed 26 Afghan civilians in the bazaar. Lt Thorlakson was wounded in the attack, but the recovery column was able to carry out its mission.

B Company's advance was completely stalled. They were finally able to get some A-10 close air support to cover the extraction of their LAV III from the other side of the wadi. To the south, the TF Orion platoons formed a blocking force as ISTAR reportage indicated that the insurgents were preparing a multi-wave assault on the forces still occupying the river bed. This assault did not materialize: the LAV IIIs fired at anything that moved with their 25mm cannons.

By 1600 hours, the two stricken LAV IIIs were extracted back to the river bed and then to Bazaar-e Panjwayi. There were numerous wounded and dead. With no effective fire support, no Afghan National Army or police in support, no up-to-date intelligence from the All Source Intelligence Centre or other sources about what he was facing in Pashmul, LCol Hope decided to withdraw TF Orion from eastern Zharey district and wait for 1 RCR to arrive to conduct a relief in place.

The Aftermath of 3 August 2006

The events of 3 August were nothing short of shocking. TF Orion took significant casualties in men and materiel, with four dead and over a dozen wounded. CTF Aegis's procedures for fire control under NATO ISAF restrictions were worse than useless; they were negligent and contributed to those casualties. The enemy achieved the psychological

boost they needed after their progressive defeats in the Battle of Pashmul and in Helmand in July. The Taliban that were now ensconced in eastern Zharey district were very different from the enemy that TF Orion sparred with in May-June-July. They were dug in. There was an obstacle plan covered by fire; the insurgents were able to use a suicide IED cell as deep strike fire support, almost as an analogue to artillery. The enemy had mortars for indirect fire and could control them. Moreover, the enemy were coordinated in ways unseen thus far in southern Afghanistan, adjacent to Highway 1 and within range of Kandahar City.

From a campaign perspective, however, the 3 August battle had unanticipated and significant positive effects. Recall that Mullah Naqib in Arghandab district acted as "kingmaker" whenever a force moved on Kandahar City in the past. The key to this concept, though not fully understood by CTF Aegis and TF Orion at the time, was that the Alikozais and their allies in Arghandab district led by Mullah Naqib essentially determined who controlled Kandahar. Historically, whoever they sided with took control of the city. Ironically and inadvertently, TF Orion's operations in Khakrez and Shah Wali Kot districts north of Arghandab disrupted any connections or support from the northern provincial insurgent groups provided to Taliban sympathetic elements in Arghandab district at this time.

Naqib and others were keeping a close eye on the fighting in Zharey district. They were concerned that the coalition forces might not be able to contain the Taliban and were making preparations to shift sides if the circumstances warranted it. Arghandab and its inhabitants could be difficult adversaries. In May-June 1987, communist forces numbering 6 000 troops launched an offensive into Arghandab. They sustained 500 killed or wounded, 30 armoured vehicles destroyed and between 5 and 16 helicopters shot down. Nearly 1 200 of the attacking Afghan communist troops changed sides along with their weapons, which in turn prompted the Soviet command to pour several thousand more troops into the district to quell the insurgency.[110]

Western coalition planners tended to view Kandahar province as a series of discrete districts. The lines delineating each district became part of a mental map and could easily fragment how one views the situation. In this case, provincial district maps depicted Arghandab and Zharey districts as completely separate areas, almost detached from each other. In the Afghan view, they were both part of a continuum from Dahla Dam down to Maywand district. The triangular Green Belt of Zharey did not suddenly stop: it tapered off into Asheque and Senjaray, which then seamlessly transitioned into lower Arghandab district. (See Figure 10-11)

An Afghan view perceived the enemy activity in eastern Zharey as a prelude to a move on Asheque, Senjaray, Arghandab and then Kandahar City. The psychological effects of the enemy getting into Arghandab district might have been enough to get Naqib to change sides and then the enemy would be able to get right into the city itself in force or otherwise affect the population psychologically.

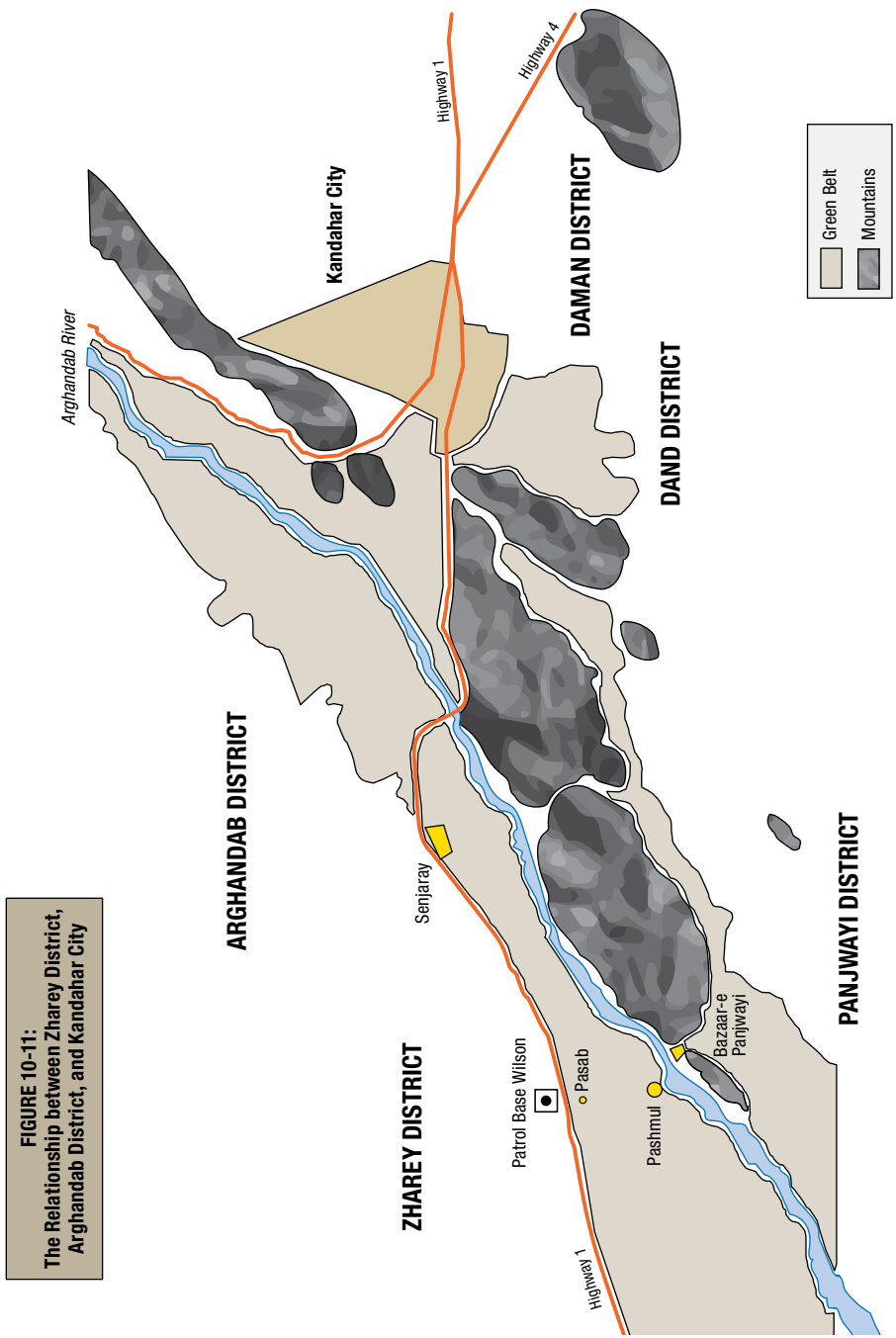


Figure 10-11: The Relationship between Zharey District, Arghandab District, and Kandahar City

The 3 August battle impressed those Afghan leaders who were considering withdrawing their support from the coalition and the government: this was conveyed by Mullah Naqib, Ahmad Wali Karzai and Asadullah Khalid to the senior Canadian commanders in mid-August after the battle.[111] The TF Orion battle on 3 August, to them, demonstrated strength and a willingness to bleed. It checked, in the Afghan view, the eastern progression of the Taliban toward Arghandab, even if the TF Orion intent was something very different. Indeed, and the next volume will depict, Mullah Naqib and his supporters would pay a heavy price over the course of the next year for not changing sides. This had serious ramifications for the people of Arghandab district, their leaders and the course of the campaign.

At the strategic level, the 3 August battle shook up ISAF HQ in Kabul. According to Canadian staff officers, this particular headquarters was operating in a world detached from the one that CTF Aegis and TF Orion were fighting in in southern Afghanistan. Many had been lulled into believing that southern Afghanistan was some form of stabilization operation instead of counterinsurgency, despite the extant facts to the contrary. Elements in ISAF HQ criticized Operation ENDURING FREEDOM for being "too kinetic" and wanted operations in the south scaled back so that "development" could take precedence. However, the enemy were not interested in acquiescing to ISAF HQ's agenda. Stage III expansion was now complete, but was ISAF HQ really capable of adapting to what was really happening down south? The battle on 3 August was the catalyst for changing the ISAF view in Kabul.

Despite the deaths of four Canadians and the inability of TF Orion to retake Pashmul, the 3 August battle played a significant role in preventing the collapse of the coalition and government of Afghanistan effort in Kandahar province and thus southern Afghanistan. The battle also had long-term effects on the perception of what was happening in southern Afghanistan.

Relief in Place

The dying did not stop, however, for TF Orion. On 5 August 2006, MCpl Raymond Arndt from the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, part of the NSE infantry platoon, was killed in a vehicle collision in the city. Then on 9 August, MCpl Jeffrey Walsh from 2 PPCLI died from an accidental gunshot wound. Two days later, the insurgents conducted a suicide attack on a Canadian convoy returning to KAF from Spin Boldak. Cpl Andrew Eykelenboom, a medic who saved the life of Niaz "Junior" Mohammed (a PRT interpreter who lost both legs in an RPG attack earlier in the tour) was killed in his G Wagon by an IED.

TF Orion was in no condition to re-launch a deliberate attack back into eastern Zharey. Indeed, TF 3-06, based on 1st Battalion, The RCR was about to rotate in. What the Ottawa-based planners did not fully comprehend was the impact of the high level of heat in August-September in Afghanistan. They most likely based their rotation planning on Operation PALLADIUM, the Stabilization Force operation in Bosnia where there

were no severe climate and time zone extremes (Afghanistan has an 8.5 to 9.5 hour time difference from Ontario, and a 10.5 to 11.5 hour difference from Alberta, depending on the time of year). This oversight meant that 1 RCR battle group was deploying into an unanticipated volatile situation without time to acclimatize, while the outgoing TF Orion battle group was exhausted from six months of unanticipated high-tempo combat operations. There were large numbers of vehicles in various states of disrepair because the NSE had its personnel and thus its repair capacity capped. There was no way 1 RCR battle group could be immediately launched into eastern Zharey, though contingencies to send in a composite TF Orion/1 RCR force were examined *in extremis*.

Every day the coalition forces waited meant that the enemy in Zharey got stronger. However, every day meant that more information came in, troops could acclimatize, and plans could be formulated. CTF Aegis was in overdrive. The stage was set for Operation MEDUSA.

ENDNOTES

1. This chapter is primarily based on a combination of material collected by the author and by his personal experiences with CTF Aegis and TF Orion during the course of operations in summer 2006. The author was extensively briefed by all elements of both headquarters and moved seamlessly between CTF Aegis and TF Orion observing the planning and then execution of each operation. LCol Ian Hope, and company commanders Majors Gallinger, Grimshaw and Fletcher were interviewed in some detail subsequently. The author also accompanied BGen David Fraser during his movements and briefings on numerous occasions. CJTF-76 commander, Major General Ben Freakley was also interviewed subsequently. For a detailed examination of the summer of 2006, see Sean M. Maloney, *Fighting For Afghanistan: A Rogue Historian at War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2011).
2. CTF Aegis briefing to the author (Kandahar Air Field, 9 June 2006).
3. TF Orion, "King 65 TiC In Panjwayi" (n/d). See also interview with Major General Ben Freakley (Watertown, New York, 25 April 2007).
4. TF Orion briefing to the author (Kandahar Air Field, 11 June 2006).
5. Interview with MGen David Fraser (Toronto, 18 June 2014).
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. "Coalition Task Force AEGIS Campaign Plan" (February 2006).
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.

16. Fraser interview.
17. See John Conrad, *What the Thunder Said: Reflections of a Canadian Officer in Kandahar* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2007).
18. Email from LCol John Conrad to the author (27 February 2012).
19. As discussed in Conrad, *What the Thunder Said*.
20. Ibid., p. 99.
21. Discussion with Major David Keehn (Kandahar Air Field, 8 March 2009).
22. Author's observations of CTF Aegis and TF Orion operations (June-July 2006).
23. Fraser interview.
24. JTF-A "R2 End Tour Report: Counter IED."
25. Notes from LCol Hope to Maloney.
26. Telephone interview with Major Kirk Gallinger (17 September 2009); interview with Major Bill Fletcher (Edmonton, 15 May 2007).
27. TF Orion BUB (5-6 April 2006).
28. Author's discussions at CTF Aegis. The staff indicated that elements from the British and American embassies on the counter-narcotics task force were the primary drivers for CN operations in Afghanistan. Both were warned by CTF Aegis that there was not enough ANSF capacity in Helmand Province and that the population would react badly to counter-narcotics operations.
29. Author's observations at CTF Aegis (June-July 2006).
30. Interview with LCol Ian Hope (Carlisle, 26 August 2008).
31. CTF Aegis Meeting with MGen Rahmatullah Raufi (6 April 2006).
32. Author's observations at CTF Aegis (June 2006). See also RC(S), notes from Ahmad Wali Karzai Meeting (30 March 2006).
33. Fraser interview; Hope interview.
34. Fletcher interview. TF Orion BUB (30 April-1 May 2006).
35. The extent of Taliban influence or control over parts of Helmand Province prior to 2006 remains speculative. Lt Col Stuart Tootal in his memoir *Danger Close* argues that the Taliban controlled the ungoverned spaces of Helmand. Other accounts suggest that the situation was more ambiguous than that, particularly Hafvenstein's *Opium Season*. My experiences in southern Afghanistan from 2003 to 2006 lead me to believe that the situation in Helmand prior to 2006 was far more complex that what *Danger Close* suggests. The implications of who knew what and when regarding what was happening in the province prior to 2006 will become wrapped up in the British post-war 'blame game' over the debacle in Helmand Province. That sort of finger-pointing is next to useless without a detailed study of British decision-making, though British ambassador Sherard Cowper-Coles has taken a first stab at it in his memoir *Cables From Kabul: The Inside Story of the West's Afghanistan Campaign* (London: Harper Press, 2012).
36. CTF Aegis briefings to the author (June 2006).
37. See Fraser interview on Khalid (18 June 2014). Regarding "The Devil That You Know" policy, BGen Fraser used this phrase in a discussion with the author in July 2006 after the author was briefed on this extremely complex situation.
38. Email from LCol Erik Liebert to author (3 November 2015).
39. PRT briefing to the author (Camp Nathan Smith, 26 July 2006).

40. PRT briefing to the author (Camp Nathan Smith, 26 July 2006).
41. Multiple discussions between the author with BGen David Fraser, LCol Ian Hope, and LCol Simon Hetherington (Summer of 2006).
42. Author's observations (December 2005, and June-July 2006).
43. PRT briefing to the author (Camp Nathan Smith, 26 July 2006).
44. Hope's notes to Maloney.
45. Interview with Major Erik Liebert (Camp Nathan Smith, 26 July 2006).
46. PRT briefing to the author (Camp Nathan Smith, 26 July 2006).
47. Discussions between the author and Padre Suleyman Demiray (Camp Nathan Smith, 26 July 2006). See also Padre Dime Ray's report, "Reflection on the Importance of Religious Issues for the Future of Afghanistan."
48. CTF Aegis briefing to the author (30 June 2006).
49. Hope's notes to Maloney. See also interview with LGen Mike Gauthier (Ottawa, 17 February 2012).
50. Author's discussion with Afghan Ministry of the Interior personnel (June and July 2006).
51. Author's observations in 2005 and 2006 and interaction with coalition and Afghan personnel dealing with police issues.
52. Author discussions with Major Harjit Sajjan.
53. Calbos interview.
54. To be perfectly accurate, those present said Asadullah Khalid "wet his pants" at the possibilities.
55. Briefing by Colonel Tom Putt to the author (Kandahar Air Field, 20 July 2006).
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Interview with Major Nick Grimshaw (Ottawa, 14 January 2008).
59. Grimshaw interview, Sajjan interview. Discussions between the author and Captain Zia Massoud (June-July 2006).
60. Grimshaw interview.
61. TF Orion reports (17 May 2006).
62. TF Orion reports (18 May 2006).
63. TF Orion reports (20-22 May 2006).
64. Fletcher interview.
65. Notes of a meeting BGen David Fraser and Governor Asadullah Khalid (22 May 2006).
66. Hope's notes to Maloney.
67. TF Orion "Operation YADGAR POR" (n/d).
68. Discussions with Captain Kevin Barry (Kandahar Air Field, 4 July 2006).
69. Briefing to the author (Kandahar Air Field, 4 July 2006).
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid.

72. Author's observations in December 2005, and June-July 2006.
73. Hope interview.
74. The author was an observer and sometimes participant in these discussions in June-July 2006.
75. CTF Bayonet briefing to the author, December 2005; Fraser interviews.
76. TF Orion reports (20-30 May 2006).
77. TF Orion reports (3-5 June 2006).
78. TF Orion reports (28 July 2006).
79. Fraser interview.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid. See also TF Orion reports (9 June 2006); TF Orion reports (2 July 2006); TF Orion reports (10 July 2006).
82. CTF Aegis (2 June 2006), Operation MOUNTAIN THRUST briefing.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid.
85. Op MOUNTAIN THRUST briefing to the author (Kandahar Air Field, June 2006).
86. The author observed the CTF Aegis and TF Orion planning processes for Op MOUNTAIN THRUST and participated in the Canadian portion of the operations.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.
90. The author's vehicle narrowly avoided the first IED of the day in Ghorak and was in one of the vehicles hit by the suicide IED attack in the early evening.
91. The author closely observed the planning and execution of this operation.
92. Similar events occurred in RC (East) when an American combat outpost was overrun.
93. The author closely observed the planning and execution of this operation.
94. The main proponent of this argument was Grahame Smith with whom the author had vigorous debate on this issue at Kandahar Air Field on numerous occasions. Other less aware or otherwise inexperienced journalists accepted Smith's argument uncritically.
95. Freakley interview.
96. According to Stuart Tootle in *Danger Close*, Helmand governor Daud pressured him to establish platoon houses in the central-northern districts including Sangin. This ran counter to what the original British mandate was, which involved supporting development efforts in and around Lashkar Gah. The British force as established was not flexible enough to do both but Tootle tried to satisfy both masters and in turn stretched his forces thin.
97. The author closely observed the planning and execution of this operation.
98. Interview with Major Nick Grimshaw (Ottawa, 14 January 2008); KPRT report (9 July 2006).
99. The author closely observed the planning and execution of this operation. See also Fletcher and Hope interviews.

100. The author closely observed the planning and execution of this operation.

101. See handwritten note from Aegis J2 and attached sketch of Garmsir. See also Gallinger interview.

102. Gallinger interview.

103. TF Orion reports (28 July 2006).

104. These are two separate operations, which flowed into one another, as opposed to the tendency by some to conflate the two operations. Additionally, some refer to it as the Battle of Pashmul or even Op MEDUSA. The Battle of Pashmul took place back in July. Some also refer to it as the Battle of Panjwayi, but as it took place in both Zharey and Panjwayi districts, that is also incorrect. Op BRAVO CORRIDOR was a B Company operation that served as the basis for some of the events of 3 August but did not encompass an assault on Pashmul from the south, nor the expansion of the operation beyond company size. In essence, the action on 3 August 2006 had no formal name. It was not part of Op MEDUSA-this operation was formulated as a response to the action on 3 August.

105. This section is compiled from a variety of post-operation storyboards and their notes supplied by 1 PPCLI to the author, plus interviews with LCol Ian Hope, LCol Harjit Sajjan, LCol Shane Schreiber and informal conversations with MCpl "Kiwi" Parsons, LCol Ian Hope, LCol Shane Schreiber, Maj Kevin Barry, and LCol Mason Stalker. The author also consulted an unpublished memoir by Cpl Gordon Whitton (also Mentioned in Dispatches) entitled "Be the Wolf," a draft of which he provided the author in 2007.

106. Hope interview.

107. As discussed in Maloney, *Fighting for Afghanistan*. There remains considerable controversy regarding the intelligence aspects of this operation. At this point, this is the best summation of the problem available due to ISTAR collection and reportage issues.

108. Grimshaw interview.

109. The "other White School" was also known as the Yellow School. There was substantial confusion at higher headquarters over the two sites as they were mixed up by those not familiar with the ground.

110. David C. Isby, *War in a Distant Country* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1989), pp. 38-39.

111. Fraser, Hope, and Lavoie independently reported this to the author during separate interviews.

MEDUSA:

AUGUST 2006-JANUARY 2007

The high water mark of large-scale insurgent operations in Afghanistan was reached in fall 2006.[1] The Taliban tide lapped at the gates of Kandahar, having been temporarily dyked in early August. Though the insurgency would continue to ebb and flow for some time, the series of Canadian, American, and Afghan operations associated with the code word MEDUSA seriously challenged the enemy's ability to use Zharey and Panjwayi districts to interdict Kandahar City or use them as launch pads for psychologically decisive 'Tet' offensive-like operations during this critical period. These operations also generated significant personnel losses, and thus sapped the enemy's momentum in Kandahar and in adjacent provinces.

As we have seen, TF Orion's earlier actions not only helped define the emerging threat tactically, they called attention to it in the higher offices of the coalition forces in Kabul. TF Orion operations collaterally convinced Afghan power brokers in Kandahar that Taliban "focoism" could be blunted and they need not panic into a state of neutrality or shift sides. The fall operations were in part designed to reinforce this critical psychological/social front. Moreover, according to the incoming ISAF Afghan Development Zone (ADZ) strategy, enemy control of Zharey district would impede the growth of the Kandahar ADZ. The enemy lodgment in eastern Zharey district had to be removed. Coming from the Governor Asadullah Khalid and Provincial Council leader Ahmad Wali Karzai, it was clear that "there can be no reconstruction unless there is security."[2]

ISAF and the Afghan Development Zone Strategy

In earlier chapters, we examined how Canadian planners were briefed on an American concept called the Regional Development Zone (RDZ) in which synergy would be generated in designated populated areas between the various reconstruction and development organizations, governmental and non-governmental, with the whole effort protected by coalition forces working with Afghan security forces. The RDZs, as they were known, were supposed to be linked to the PRTs, who would coordinate the reconstruction activity. By 2005, the RDZ concept was defunct as there was no funding and no bureaucracy to support it. The Strategic Advisory Team-Afghanistan in Kabul was working toward a solution to the high-end coordination issue in order to get international investors: this was the Afghan National Development Strategy. In early 2006, when Lt Gen David Richards took

command of ISAF, the RDZ idea was rejuvenated and rebranded. The RDZs became 'Afghan Development Zones' and were linked to the emergent Afghan National Development Strategy. The Policy Action Group, which brought American, NATO and Afghan representatives together to agree on common approaches to the insurgency, discussed the basic tenets of the ADZ strategy in August 2006. President Karzai subsequently approved the ADZ strategy.[3]

Though many popularly referred to it as the "ink spot" or "ink blot" theory and compared it to British operations in Malaya in the 1950s, this was an over-simplification. The new NATO strategy took the old RDZ concept and refined it. Conceptually, each PRT would identify areas where development and security could be focused – these were usually the more populated areas that also tended to be grouped together. Ideally, the Afghan security forces, police and army, would handle the security of the zone itself, while ISAF manoeuvre battle groups would handle security on the periphery of the zone. Special operations forces would cause disruption outside the zone. (See Figure 11-1)

Crucial to the ADZ concept, however, was the role of governance and the progressive move toward having the Afghans handle the coordination of security and development inside each zone. That was where the ANDS came into play; the ADZ strategy was supposed to be harmonized with the ANDS in every way possible. It was hoped that over time the zones would expand and link up – all over the country.[4]

On 1 August 2006, the ADZ strategy, now called Operation ARGUS RESOLVE (English) and OQAB ('Eagle' in Dari) became the baseline strategy for Regional Command (South). CTF Aegis was progressively prepared throughout summer 2006 for its formal acceptance, so it was not a surprise to the Aegis staff. Indeed, the existing CTF Aegis campaign plan fit neatly within the new strategy, in part because Canadian officers were situated throughout ISAF and other coalition headquarters maintaining situational awareness and input.

President Karzai at the time "insisted that no one talk about ADZs publicly, the [international community] strongly agreed.... Defining the zones might lead to attacks before security is in place." Lt Gen Richards "promised that ISAF would not abandon any key regional centers when the zones were established. He stressed that ADZs are not a defensive concept and that ISAF will carry on offensive operations to drive the Taliban out of their strongholds."[5]

In Regional Command (South), the baseline ADZ plan was called Operation SATYR PYRRHA. The PRT and Afghan security forces would handle the ADZ itself, which initially consisted of Kandahar City. The Security Zone, which included the districts immediately adjacent to the city, was the responsibility of the battle group, the PRT and Afghan security forces. Outside of that was the SOF Zone (also called the Disrupt Zone), which was everywhere else. Spin Boldak was a quasi-ADZ owing to the unique conditions established down there by Col Abdul Raziq. (See Figure 11-2)

FIGURE 11-1:
Afghan Development Zone –
Security Forces Dispositions Conceptual Model,
2006-2007

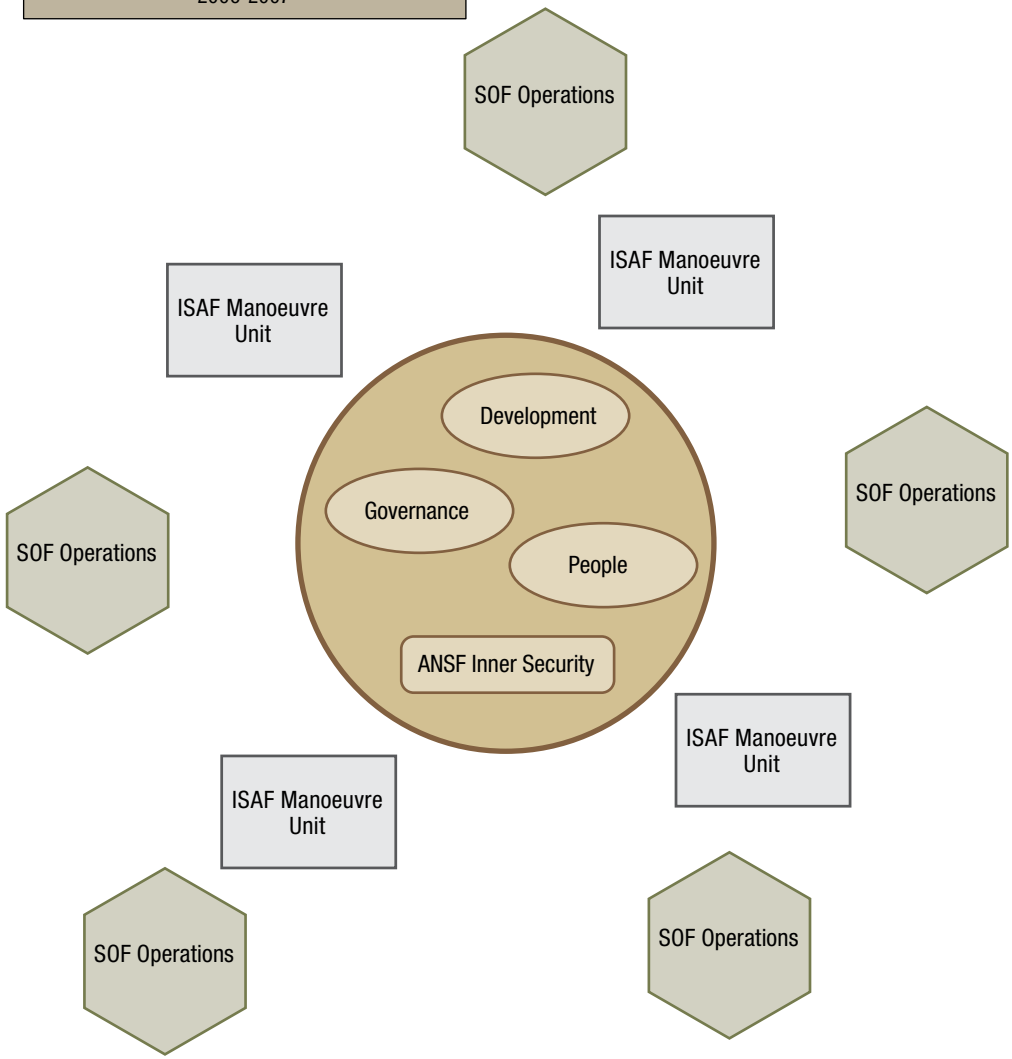


Figure 11-1: Afghan Development Zone – Security Forces Dispositions Conceptual Model, 2006-2007

Unfortunately, as NATO ISAF took over, there were more pressing problems. Operation SATYR PYRRHA, conceived before TF Orion's battles in summer, was not structured to withstand an assault involving hundreds or thousands of organized insurgents equipped with heavy weapons.

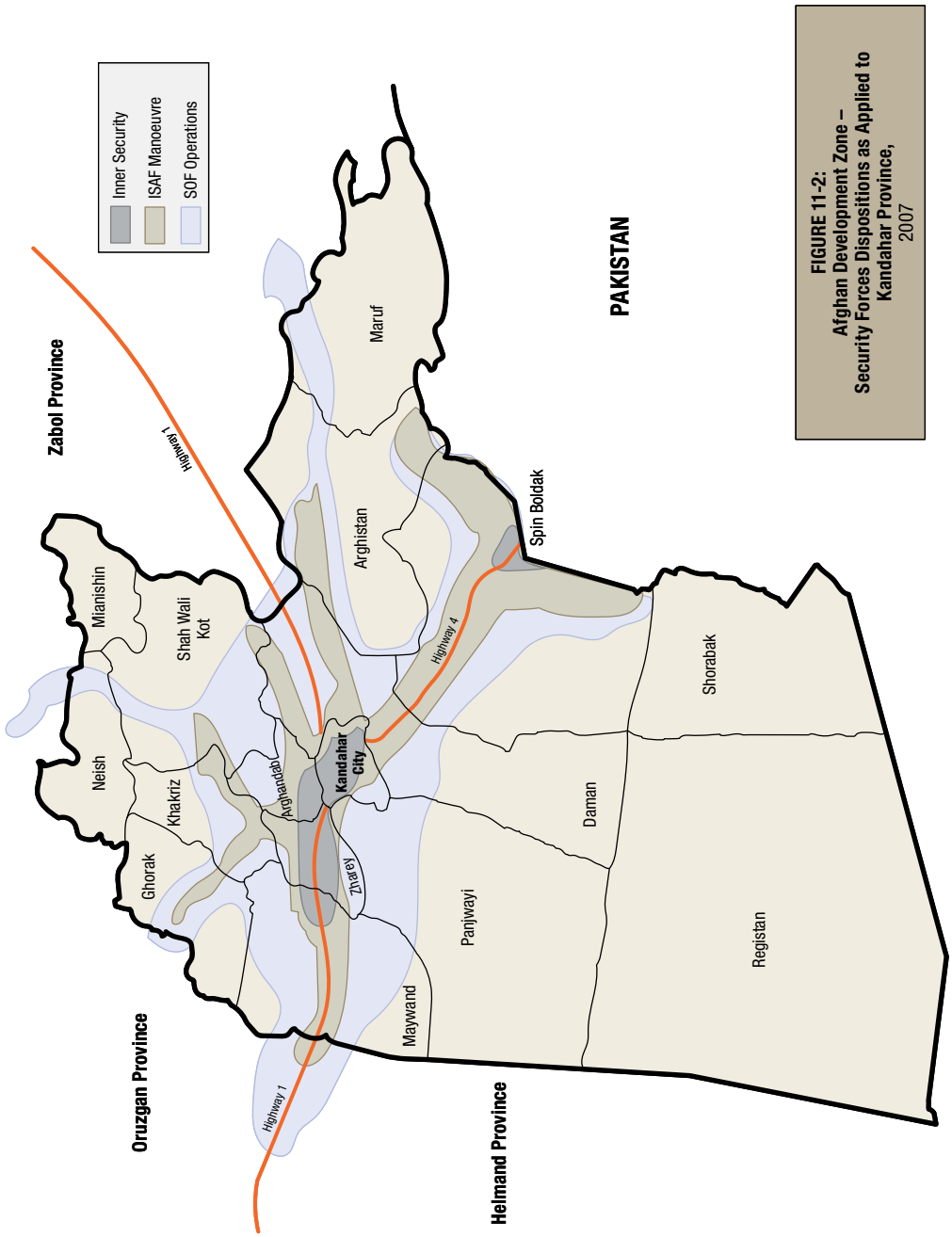


FIGURE 11-2:
Afghan Development Zone –
Security Forces Dispositions as Applied to
Kandahar Province,
2007

Figure 11-2: Afghan Development Zone – Security Forces Dispositions as Applied to Kandahar Province, 2007

The Genesis of Operation MEDUSA

When the shock of the Second Battle of Pashmul wore off, the first informal sessions by BGen David Fraser's staff at Regional Command (South)[6] took place three days later focused on what to do about Pashmul. These sessions were the first iterations of what was later called Operation MEDUSA. The realization that the enemy were in a fortified defensive position and was capable of coordinating indirect fire with ground manoeuvre and IED attacks did not distract Regional Command (South) staff from the fact that there were substantial psychological aspects of whatever they instructed their forces to do in future operations. One one hand, there were the Afghans in Kandahar City. There was substantial pressure from the Governor, Assadullah Khalid to get into Zharey and Panjwayi because of the grape harvesting season, the pillar of Kandahar's economic prosperity.[7]

According to LCol Shane Schreiber, "We had a big meeting with the governor and the local tribal leaders. They told us. The governor was straight with us: 'I've got tribal leaders, tribal elders, guys in this room that are making deals with the Taliban because they do not think that you, ISAF, can defeat the Taliban. They have no faith in you; you have all kinds of capability, but not the will.' And that's what it was all about."[8] The PRT reported that, according to Asadullah Khalid "local perception now is that ISAF is weak and does not want to fight the Taliban, only wanting to carry out reconstruction activity."[9]

At the same time, Lt Gen Richard's ISAF HQ in Kabul, "who didn't really want to hear it," according to Canadian officers, had to be convinced that there needed to be a stand-up fight for the Western approaches to Kandahar City. Why was this the case? For the most part, there "was a biased view [in] ISAF that the Americans under Maj Gen Freakley had done too much kinetic stuff, too much fighting and not enough reconstruction." This view was reflected in the media, which in turn put pressure on national governments from NATO member countries who were themselves confronted with the possibility of dissent on Afghanistan by populations who had been told that Afghanistan was a peacekeeping operation. To make matters worse, the British situation in Helmand was spinning out of control again, prompting the reinforcement of 3 PARA with nearly half a brigade of troops followed by lots of questions from the British media as to what was happening in Afghanistan. This had a spillover effect in Canada, particularly in NDHQ in Ottawa, where "certain elements within [National Defence were] concerned that we've suffered casualties, that it is supposed to be easier than it is and we're fighting while we're supposed to be doing reconstruction."[10]

BGen Fraser went to Richards and explained the situation: in effect, the enemy salient in Zharey district had to be reduced in what amounted to a near-conventional operation. There were not enough forces to reduce this threat in Regional Command (South) and achieve the larger objectives related to the ADZ strategy. ISAF asked the French force

commander for assistance. He was prepared to redeploy but was blocked by his superiors in Paris. The same thing happened to the Germans. Brigadier Ed Butler was able to cut loose a handful of troops to backfill 1 RCR, but was tied down in Helmand. Richards eventually told Fraser, "I can't give you anything, but you have my support."[11]

The danger at this juncture was that there might be too many constraints from Ottawa and Kabul over the use of force, which would seriously attenuate the vital operations designed to dig the insurgents out of Zharey and Panjwayi districts. This was not the same enemy who fought the coalition back in 2005 and it was becoming clear that they might not even be the same enemy who had mounted the spring 2006 operations. Regional Command (South) had to take time and build the intelligence picture as part of the process of educating its new coalition headquarters in Kabul as well as NDHQ in Ottawa. Maj Gen Freakley, who was now the DComd of ISAF, supported them on the Kabul front; he now accepted, after the First and Second Battles of Pashmul, that there was a serious problem west of the city.[12] Similarly, Regional Command (South) had to demonstrate to ISAF HQ that what they were about to do fit within the parameters of the ISAF ADZ strategy and ensure that effects mitigation and reconstruction were part of the plan. That would also take time.

Further pressures involved "the highest political levels in Afghanistan" and this specifically referred to the demands by the Karzai government that Highway 1 be kept open. The number of ambushes on that route went up dramatically after 3 August 2006 and the Ministry of Defence instructed the Afghan National Army to do everything it could to keep the corridor open. Of course, Regional Command (South) was inextricably linked to any activity on Highway 1 so these considerations became part of the planning process.[13]

Concurrent with these moves, elements in ISAF HQ started to view the upcoming operation as a strategic information operations opportunity. This differed from the Regional Command (South) view that saw the plan as an opportunity to have operational effects on the Kandahar power brokers and save the city. For some, MEDUSA presented itself as a means to demonstrate NATO's will on an international stage.[14]

A key issue at Regional Command (South) was determining exactly what enemy they were up against. The problematic intelligence architecture did not help. A new ASIC led by Maj Dominic Goulet, arrived on the ground in early August 2006. Some of the newcomers in the ASIC viewed the information on the enemy's dispositions in Zharey district, collected by Maj Nick Grimshaw's B Company, Maj Harjit Sajjan, the PRT, and by now, their substantial Afghan contacts in the communities, with some skepticism. One Afghan source with military experience passed on that enemy bunkers under construction in Zharey were built with enough overhead cover to withstand 500-pound bombs and he recommended that NATO use 1 000-pound bombs but such reports did not always traverse the intelligence-planning system, nor was proffered Afghan advice usually taken. The ASIC commander later complained that advice provided to

the Regional Command (South) commander by his organization was not used as much as unvetted non-ASIC sources.[15]

Through his sources Maj Sajjan believed that there was a command and control node at Sperwan Ghar in Panjwayi; Zangabad was a weapons dump; there was a logistics route that led from Sperwan Ghar to Zangabad and Talukan, and across the river into Zharey; and the Gundy Ghar feature was another command and control node. There was also a medical node in Siah Choy, Zharey district. Enemy reinforcements coming in from Pakistan used Gundy Ghar and Sperwan Ghar as navigation, orientation and collection points before they were sent forward to the fighting.[16]

What was less clear were the enemy dispositions in eastern Zharey district. What were the locations of prominent enemy commanders? Who were they? What were the specific operating procedures of the forces based there? Regional Command (South) wanted to conduct a series of shaping operations to further define the target – in other words, manoeuvre-to-collect operations, and wanted more ISTAR resources, UAVs and SIGINT specifically, so that manoeuvring forces would have over-watch to see how the enemy reacted. However, the fact that Regional Command (South) was now a NATO headquarters meant that it did not have the same level of access to American intelligence systems CTF Aegis had when it worked for the American headquarters, CJTF-76. The American National Command Element commander at KAF, Col Steve Williams, and his staff acted as crucial and sometimes informal links during this period to make up for some of these deficiencies, and Maj Gen Freakley also assisted in this area. Regional Command (South) was not always a priority for these systems. Notably, the oft-maligned Canadian TUAVs remained important contributors to the ISTAR plan.

By this time, BGen Fraser and Lt Col Peter Connolly, one of his Australian operations officers, had also developed close relations with Lt Col Don Bolduc, the American commander of Special Operations TF 31. In order to more clearly define enemy dispositions in Panjwayi district, Lt Col Bolduc agreed to deploy part of TF 31 in a sweeping manoeuvre-to-collect operation into the Registan Desert and then into southern Panjwayi district. Once it got there, TF 31 working with part of 2nd Kandak, 1-205 Brigade would recce several areas of interest for Taliban presence in places that would become familiar to Canadian Army units over the next five years: Talukan, Mushan, Sperwan Ghar, and up to Ma'Sum Ghar.[17]

The other key relationship was between Fraser and Maj Gen Freakley. Fraser said, "I need help. What can you give me?" Freakley, as the senior American commander of 10th Mountain Division, was able to cut an infantry company and a pair of 105mm guns to augment Bolduc's TF 31, and facilitated the efforts of the American NCE led by Col Steve Williams. At the same time, conversations between Fraser and the British Director of Special Forces resulted in the redeployment of part of TF 42 to handle observation and interdiction tasks in the Reg Desert.[18]

Lt Gen Richards and Maj Gen Rahmatullah Raufi put pressure on Bismillah Khan in Kabul to deploy whatever he could to Kandahar. Afghan National Army support arrived in the form of two kandaks' worth of company groups from other Afghan regional commands in the north. These were distributed by Maj Gen Raufi to cover key population centres, specifically Bazaar-e Panjwayi. TF 31 was augmented with an Afghan company as well.[19]

Another key aspect of MEDUSA planning was the role of the PRT, led by LCol Simon Hetherington. An operation like MEDUSA would generate substantial infrastructure damage. Effects had to be mitigated. In time the PRT's role increased, but the problem, as usual, was the lack of money. The PRT worked hard to leverage reconstruction funds from international sources as there were virtually no Canadian funding sources available and CIDA was hesitant to participate. Colonel Williams from the American NCE, however, had access to substantial Commanders Emergency Response Programme monies. The combination of LCol Hetherington's connections and this money would prove to be an important factor later on during the operation.[20] Germany also kicked in several million euros.[21]

Task Force 3-06 Arrives

LCol Omer Lavoie took command of 1st Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment in summer 2005, he knew he was taking his battalion to Afghanistan. From that point on, he focused his battalion's training on traditional counterinsurgency methods and dismounted patrolling while keeping a close eye on developments as the PRT and TF Gun Devils coped with the Kandahar Taliban. Structurally, TF 3-06 was a mirror of TF Orion as it made its preparations: three infantry companies, a battery of four M-777 guns from E Battery, an engineer squadron (23 Field Squadron), and recce troops from the RCD. The planners understood that the PRT would come under command of the battle group and assigned B Company to it as the force protection company. Conceptually, the TF 3-06 that arrived in Kandahar in August 2006 was based on 2005 thinking that was in turn aligned with the original CTF Aegis campaign plan.[22]

Despite several visits to TF Orion in spring 2006 to gain better information on the changing situation, it was still a shock when a Taliban 82mm mortar round landed nearly on LCol Lavoie's LAV III during a recce in Panjwayi district with LCol Ian Hope just prior to the transfer of command authority between the commanders. With three wounded in his vehicle including his gunner, LCol Lavoie determined that his first move once he took over would be to occupy that piece of high ground across the river south of Pashmul and take out the enemy's indirect fire capability. This was not shaping up to be the counterinsurgency fight that TF 3-06 had planned or was structured for. Indeed, Patrol Base Wilson was mortared for three nights in a row during the handover, forcing troops to sleep in their vehicles.[23]

TF 3-06's dispositions on the ground also mirrored those of TF Orion. LCol Lavoie, like LCol Hope, was responsible for FOB Martello in Shah Wali Kot, operations in Spin Boldak on the border, and PRT operations in the province. B Company, under Maj Geoff Abthorpe, was assigned to the PRT but for all intents and purposes, he became responsible for FOB Martello. C or "Charles" Company, commanded by Maj Matthew Sprague, was supposed to move to Spin Boldak but this was put on hold and part of ISTAR Squadron deployed instead. A Company from 2 PPCLI, commanded by Maj Mike Wright, was to go to that piece of high ground near Bazaar-e Panjwayi across from Pashmul and start patrolling. E Battery, commanded by Maj Greg Ivey, took over Maj Steve Gallagher's four M-777s. LCol Lavoie made changes to the recce organization and established an ISTAR Squadron under Maj Andrew Lussier. This included a recce troop of Coyotes from the RCD, Recce Platoon from 1 RCR, and the 1 RCR snipers. As for the engineers, Maj Mark Gasparotto commanded 23 Field Squadron. He had two field troops (with the LAV IIIs crewed by RCD armoured soldiers), a heavy equipment troop, and three EOD teams, two of which were heavy (Bisons and robots) and one that was airmobile.[24] The electronic warfare and TUAV organizations continued on as before. (See Figure 11-3)

Unfortunately, the state of TF 3-06's equipment, particularly the LAV IIIs, left much to be desired. They had already been to hell and back by this point in 2006. The decision to truncate LCol John Conrad's NSE numbers and capability back in 2005 meant that the NSE lacked the capacity to sustain and maintain the vehicle fleet after six months of constant operations all over southern Afghanistan. The NSE itself was worn out. The vehicle off road rate was approaching 80% in August but beefing up the NSE with "technical assistance visits" to bypass the bureaucratically mandated troop ceiling only took the organization so far.[25]

A major deficiency was the continued use of the vulnerable G Wagons as ECM vehicles. The RG-31 fleet was having severe problems with their alternators so the G Wagons carried on in this role. 23 Field Squadron's heavy equipment was extremely problematic. None of it had been used during the TF Orion days because of the nature of their operations. Indeed, most of the vehicles had been in Bosnia or Kosovo, then Kabul, and then Kandahar, but were unserviceable. There was no gap crossing equipment: it had to be fabricated at KAF. None of the bulldozers worked, so an unused British D-6 was "scrounged" from a lot at KAF for the time being.[26] Canada still had no route clearance package similar to the American system to take on the IEDs.

Then there was the matter of ammunition. During the handover to TF 3-06, LCol Lavoie found that there were only 300 rounds of 155mm high-explosive ammunition in-theatre, when in his view there should have been a minimum of 3 000 rounds with a resupply of 500 a day. This went to BGen Fraser and down to LCol Conrad who confirmed the shortage.

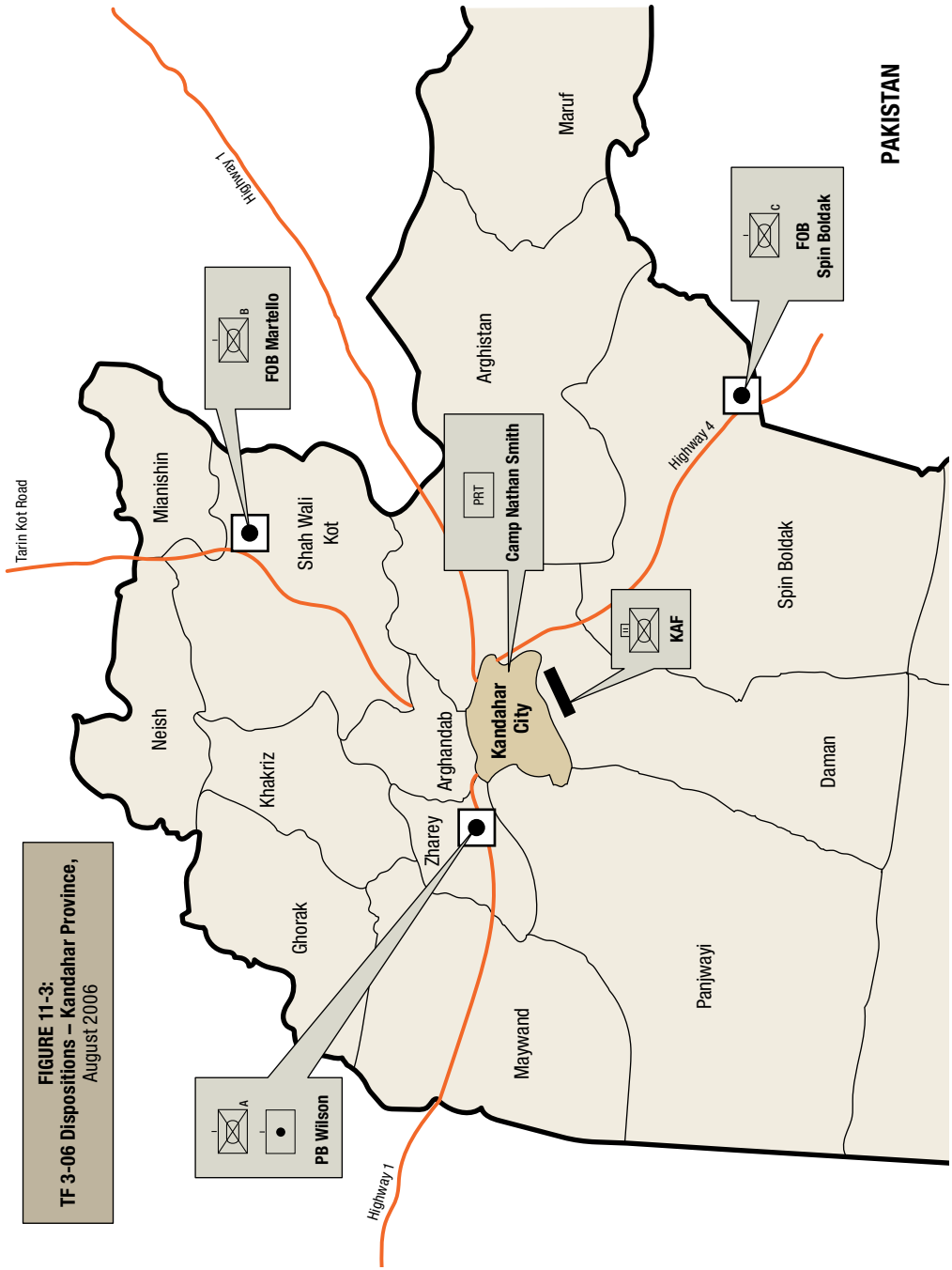


Figure 11-3: TF 3-06 Dispositions – Kandahar Province, August 2006

The July usage had not been replenished partly because LCol Conrad was personally overwhelmed, partly because of the decision to cut personnel positions, and partly because of the unfamiliarity with handling wartime consumption rates. This was a legacy of the UN 'peacekeeping' era, when artillery batteries deployed to the Balkans but rarely fired.[27]

When the request for more ammunition reached Kabul, a Canadian air force general became upset because the ammunition requirements were going to "put a significant drain on 'his' air lift." A phone call from Kabul demanded justification as the "previous battle group fired 600 rounds, why do you need so much?" The air movement people were eventually convinced of the requirements and set out to build up stocks as quickly as possible.[28]

Then there was the heat. TF 3-06's personnel arrived in the first weeks of August 2006, when the average temperature was between 50-60 degrees Celsius. Expecting troops to get off the C-130 Hercules and conduct operations, especially when loaded with body armour and ammunition, was clearly unrealistic. Acclimatization under such conditions was mandatory. The rotation plan reflected a bureaucratic approach based on the UN 'peacekeeping' era. The operational tempo and climatic conditions of Afghanistan were clearly not a factor for Ottawa planners who were still caught in the Balkans paradigm and on a Balkans schedule of rotating every six months. The enemy, on the other hand, had substantial time to acclimatize and were already in place.

The Battle of Ma'Sum Ghar, 19 August 2006[29]

During a familiarization tour with LCol Hope on 15 August, LCol Lavoie's LAV III was nearly struck by an enemy mortar round, and the subsequent blast wounded his gunner. As a result, Lavoie ordered A Company to take control of the Ma'Sum Ghar feature and locate where the mortar rounds were being fired from.[30]

Maj Wright's A Company received the handover from Maj Grimshaw and B Company on 14 August at Patrol Base Wilson. Zharey district south of the first wadi line was a 'no-go' area and this was supported with Maj Sajjan's information, which Maj Wright considered "by far the best int[elligence] product we had. I carried that trace the whole tour."[31] On 19 August, Capt Massoud's Standby Police Unit 005, occupying Bazaar-e Panjwayi with an Afghan National Army company, received fire and reported that the enemy were going to try and take the Panjwayi district centre. Lavoie ordered Wright to respond. Keeping 1 Platoon to secure Patrol Base Wilson and 2 Platoon to act as a QRF for Highway 1, 3 Platoon, a forward observation officer from E Battery, and A Company headquarters deployed east back down Highway 1 to the Route Fosters' junction and then west. (See Figure 11-4)

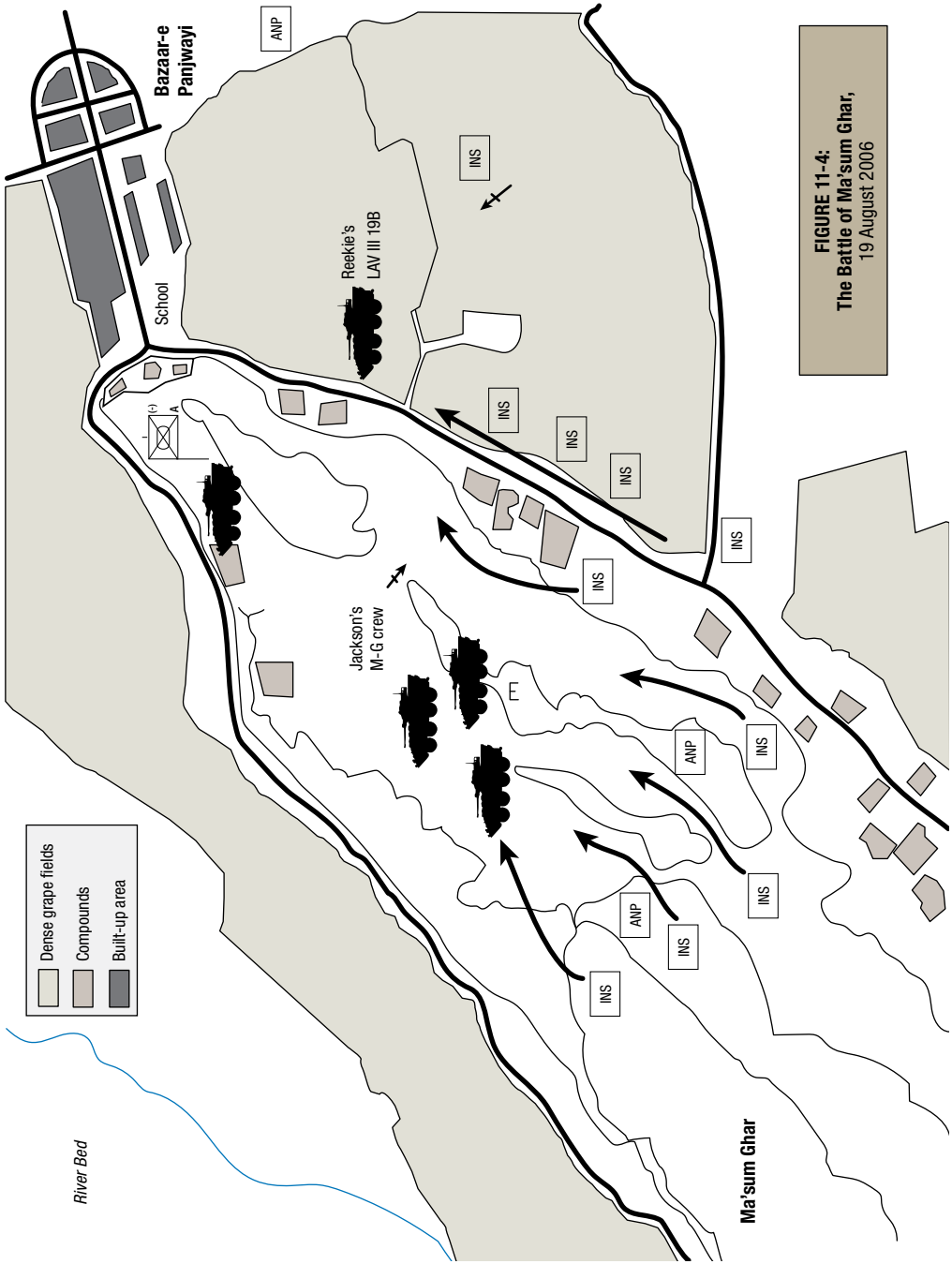


Figure 11-4: The Battle of Ma'Sum Ghar, 19 August 2006

On arrival in Bazaar-e Panjwayi, the troops noted that the whole place was shuttered and the only people on the streets were the police. Moving to the Ma'Sum Ghar feature that overlooked both districts, Maj Wright saw that the police unit was focused north on Pashmul but that no one was looking south and southeast of the Ghar. He put two sections and the forward observation officer in positions just north and below the police positions on the hill, and put the third section facing south. Capt Mike Reekie was sent down to Route Fosters below this position in his LAV III. At 1845 hours, machine gun fire from the grape fields south of Ma'Sum Ghar erupted. Inside the Ma'Sum Ghar bowl, the 'police' positions started firing an RPG at A Company's LAVs; the Taliban had infiltrated the position and taken out two observation positions between A Company's sections.

As night fell, WO Mike Jackson and one of the sections worked their way to a 'saddle' in the Ghar overlooking the south. Once they moved up, they engaged several waves of insurgents working their way north through the fields and across Route Fosters, looking to join the fight. During this action, the section accounted for an estimated 40 enemy casualties.[32]

Maj Wright's communications with LCol Lavoie nearly broke down and he had to relay everything through Patrol Base Wilson. Lavoie asked if Wright needed to be reinforced: Wright declined, explaining that the situation was too confused on the ground and there would be too much risk of a 'blue on blue.' AH-64s, TUAV and Predator were on the way. It was still difficult for Wright to discern where the enemy were firing from and at this point, Capt Massoud withdrew his police.

Capt Mike Reekie and his crew, on the other hand, were moving forward, looking for a position to put their vehicle, but the terrain was too flat. He finally found a fold in the ground, but then realized they were nearly 400 metres away from Ma'Sum Ghar. This move may have forced the enemy to prematurely commit the fighters he had in the area. Capt Reekie's vehicle engaged several waves of enemy who were organized in 10-man sections, with each section containing a PKM machine gun and an RPG. They appeared drugged as they walked into certain death. The LAV driver, Cpl Chad Chevrefils, used night vision goggles from his position to identify targets for Capt Reekie and his gunner, Sgt Dan Holley. By the time they had to withdraw, this crew operating a single vehicle, with no air or artillery support, had killed an estimated 30 to 45 insurgents as they emerged in groups of five from the compounds in the area.[33] Reekie's entire LAV crew was decorated for this action. Reekie and Chevrefils both received the Medal of Military Valour while Holley, Cpl Nigel Gregg, and Pte Tim Wilkins were Mentioned in Dispatches.

Running low on ammunition, Maj Wright planned to withdraw, link up with 2 Platoon on Route Fosters, conduct a combat resupply, and come back into the fight. On withdrawal, however, two G Wagons would not start and had to be towed. At one point during the course of the action, WO Michael Jackson and MCpl Paul Munroe were forced to conduct a fighting

withdrawal. They both worked under fire to extract stricken vehicles and eventually regrouped their men to continue the fight. Jackson and Munroe were later awarded the Medal of Military Valour for their actions.

As 2 Platoon roared into the desert leaguer and passed off all the ammo it could find, 3 Platoon launched back down the highway. A Predator orbiting overhead identified an enemy ambush party at the gas station and dispatched them with a Hellfire missile. Another ambush party that infiltrated from the north tried to engage 3 Platoon on Fosters but the LAV IIIs shot their way out of it. Maj Wright wanted to link up with the Afghan National Army positions north of the district centre and plotted a route on a black track that bypassed the town. A LAV III bogged down, which forced a halt. Then 2 Platoon, back at its positions on Fosters, observed an enemy RPG team and section south of the road – and engaged them. Intelligence reports flowed in that a company-sized enemy force was infiltrating through Badvan Ghar from Zharey district while a high volume of fire was directed at the Afghan National Army positions in the Panjwayi district centre.

Photo Credit: Author

The Ma'Sum Ghar feature as seen from 'One Tank Hill' to the north east in June 2006, many months before the forward operating base was constructed. The enemy engaged A Company, 2 PPCLI and Afghan forces on the night of 19 August 2006 as the Taliban infiltrated the feature from the west.

Maj Wright was again concerned about the possibility of a 'blue on blue' and requested permission at 0300 to re-group and wait for better control measures. The Afghan police reported multiple wounded and asked for an escort back down Fosters to Kandahar City. Unusually, the insurgents left many of their dead behind. The remains of some 37 insurgents were recovered in and around Ma'Sum Ghar and Bazaar-e Panjwayi, most of them fragmented by 25mm fire. An estimate, based on a variety of sources, suggests that the enemy lost 75 to 100 personnel that night, with an even larger number of wounded.[34]

Photo Credit: Author

This is the southern face of the Ma'Sum Ghar feature taken from the communities south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi. On 17 August 2006, elements of A Company 2 PPCLI defeated an insurgent thrust from the left directed at taking the feature and the town. One LAV III crew on the road and a machine gun position below the saddle inflicted an estimated 75 enemy killed and thwarted the attack.

Bazaar-e Panjwayi, the Panjwayi district centre and Ma'Sum Ghar remained in coalition hands. Wright and Lavoie agreed that a permanent position needed to be established at Ma'Sum Ghar as it was going to be key terrain for any future actions in the area. The next night, A Company endured a sustained ambush, a 10-kilometre gauntlet of fire from Patrol Base Wilson, through Asheque, Senjaray and to the bridge over the Arghandab on the outskirts of Kandahar City. The ever-innovative enemy lit fires along one side of the road in order to silhouette the Canadian vehicles for their RPG gunners. The insurgent commanders considered it as a payback over their losses of 19 August. Lavoie noted that "It became apparent to me that there was clearly more than 50 Taliban in this area…they've clearly indicated they have the resolve to fight and they're fighting in [a] conventional sense, head to head."[35]

Plans, Mid to Late August 2006

Regional Command (South)'s warning order, coinciding with the transfer of command authority from TF Orion to TF 3-06 and the events of 19 August, instructed ISAF forces in all four provinces to set conditions for the establishment of four ADZs: Lashkar Gah, Tarinkot, Kandahar City and Qalat. "Task Force Kandahar," that is, TF 3-06, had additional tasks. These were: to support Afghan National Army operations to secure Highway 1; to conduct operations to generate intelligence without becoming decisively engaged; and to extract or support SOF operations as required. The Canadian battle group was to "conduct task force level feints to convince the enemy of a battle group assault on his southern flank" that is, Pashmul in Zharey district. The battle group was to be prepared to "exploit into Pashmul" and to "clear enemy positions in Pashmul and west."[36] (See Figure 11-5)

This was LCol Lavoie's introduction to Operation MEDUSA. By 25 August 2006, the TF 3-06 operations staff led by Maj Jay Harvey had examined several courses of action and issued its warning order to the task force. TF 3-06's concept of operations was to:

> …deceive the enemy into believing that a major assault on their C2 and CSS nodes is imminent by advancing with purpose from the EAST to WEST on two separate axis. I will achieve this by using two balanced Company Group teams one team north along Highway 1 and one team south utilizing primarily Route Fosters. Once the Taliban understand that their critical vulnerabilities are under attack from a major ground force and they mass to defend themselves, higher Brigade assets will destroy their operational capability using precision fire from Close Air Support, Aviation, and Artillery. If an opportunity to exploit further into PASHMUL arises, the battle group will continue to secure ground and claim not only physical victory but it will also be an I/O defeat for the Taliban.[37]

B Company, meanwhile, had just settled in to FOB Martello. Maj Geoff Abthorpe had already established an aggressive patrol plan, pushing out three and four patrols a day, when the mortars and rockets started. Probes of the forward operating base's perimeter followed these harassing attacks. On one occasion, the Afghan National Army artillery detachment started to take out insurgents with direct fire from its D-30 guns. Reduced to two platoons and a field troop of engineers,[38] B Company discovered that all was not well in Shah Wali Kot district but the problem was not just insurgents. A heavily armed gang was intercepting truck traffic on the Tarinkot road. This team of six was killed in a gunfight during a joint Canadian/ANSF patrol, but the mortar team continued to plague FOB Martello.[39]

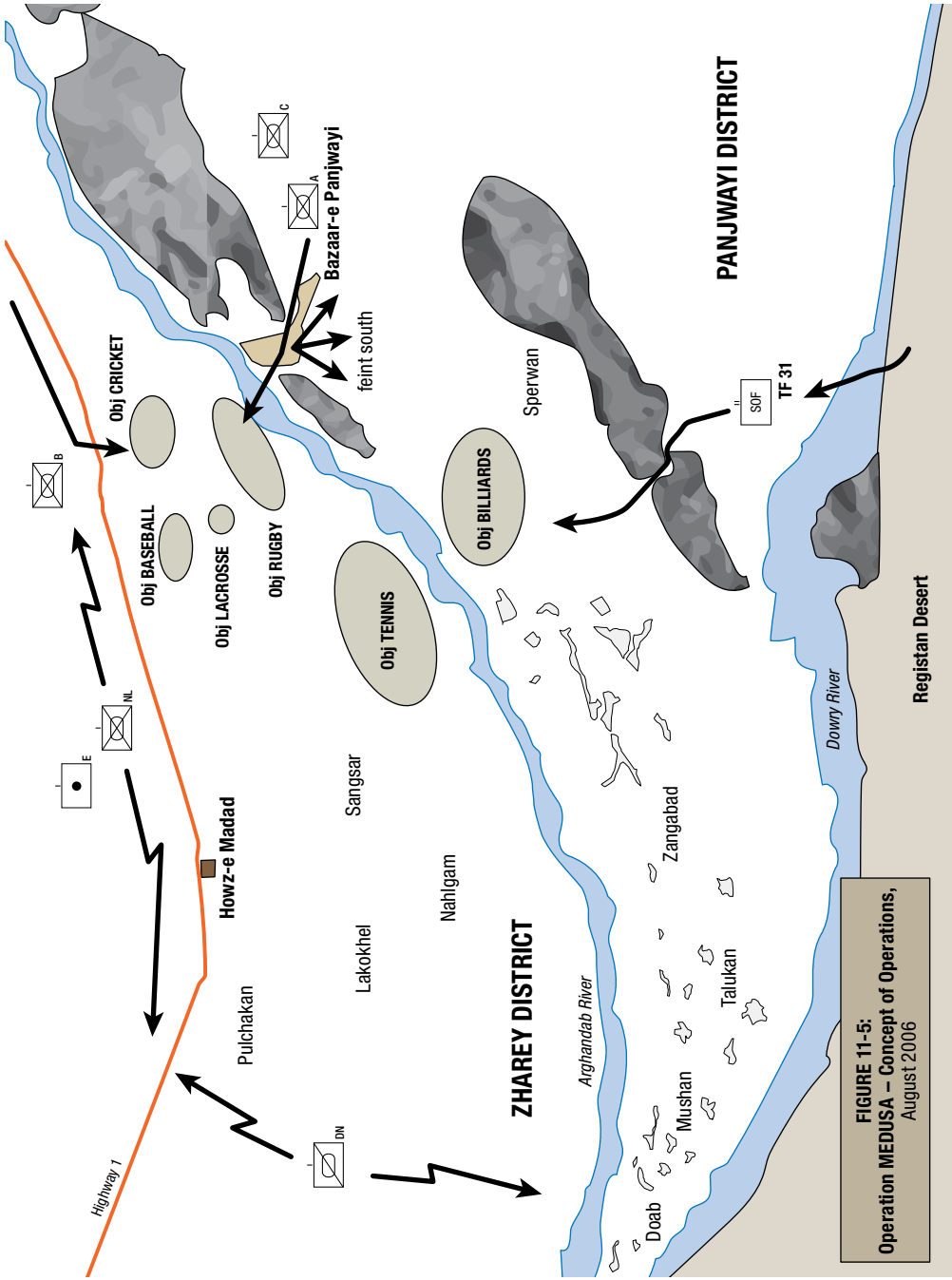


Figure 11-5: Operation MEDUSA – Concept of Operations, August 2006

Fraser also decided to flush out western Panjwayi district after the battle of Ma'Sum Ghar and eliminate the shadow government in the area.[40] Lt Col Bolduc's special operations TF 31, with Capt Derek Prohar along as the Aegis SOF liaison officer, moved from KAF into the Reg Desert on 26 August. In the desert wastes, TF 31 engaged infiltrating Taliban fighters on numerous occasions, intercepted Pakistan Army personnel driving trucks containing hidden spaces loaded with ammunition and weapons, and even stumbled across a Taliban training camp. This was further evidence of a substantial build-up and support network backstopping the enemy forces west of Kandahar City. By 31 August, TF 31 made 'land-fall' in southern Panjwayi district and continued to manoeuvre-to-collect.[41]

The TF 3-06 Tactical Operations Centre became a focal point for Sperwer TUAV-cued engagements. Pioneered by TF Orion, the use of TUAV or MQ-1 Predator to spot for close air support, artillery or armed Predator was expanded by TF 3-06. In late August 2006, the focus of these operations turned to several probable Taliban staging areas along Highway 1. The first mission on 22 August involved the discovery of 45 insurgents receiving orders. Since there were no weapons identified, the strike package was waved off. Then the enemy broke into three groups and moved to fighting positions on Highway 1. One group of 15 took up fighting positions near the road, while another moved to a flank likely to be used by coalition forces, with the third group of 15 positioned in reserve. The enemy continued to train on the ground that they would fight on but without weapons.[42]

TF 3-06 started taking casualties. On 22 August, a suicide bomber attacked Camp Nathan Smith, killing Cpl David Braun from 2 PPCLI and wounding three other Canadians. LCol Lavoie wanted to send a message and get some payback, so he instructed A Company to conduct a patrol down Highway 1. The M-777s, Harriers and Predators were "locked on" waiting for ambush teams to emerge, which they did: some 40 to 50 fighters were identified armed to the teeth. Unfortunately, the enemy commander deployed them along the road so they were spread out in a line. Maj Greg Ivey suggested dropping a couple of artillery rounds nearby in order to force them into cover and concentrate. 30 insurgents ran for a single compound while the others dispersed. An RAF Harrier came in and leveled the compound with 500-pound bombs, killing 29 insurgents. After that, ambushes on Highway 1 dropped off.[43]

The formal operations order for MEDUSA came down from Regional Command (South) on 27 August. The intelligence appreciation noted that there was increased movement of enemy high-value target leadership and Al Qaeda trainers into Zharey, plus a mix of HiG and out-of-area fighters. Estimates of enemy forces suggested that there were 200 local fighters and 200 to 300 fighters from elsewhere. They were entrenched under reinforced defensive positions, and had demonstrated that they could conduct fire and movement

through their daily ambushes on Highway 1. TF 3-06's mission was to defeat Taliban forces in Pashmul to set the conditions for a Kandahar ADZ. This was to be done by establishing freedom of movement on Highway 1 and the security of Kandahar City. The plan had four phases and two sub-phases. Phase 1 involved shaping operations. Operations conducted by TF 3-06 starting on 15 August were deemed to be part of this effort, especially manoeuvre-to-collect. The task force was deemed already involved in Phase 1: defining the enemy dispositions, and destroying targets of opportunity. A Danish recce company working in western Zharey, British SOF operating to the southwest, and American SOF to the south would support these efforts.[44] (See Figure 11-6)

Phase 2 or Decisive Operations, was specifically designed to defeat the enemy in the vicinity of Pashmul. Phase 2 had two different sub-phases. Phase 2A, or "Strike," was a feint with TF 3-06 simulating an assault on Objectives RUGBY (Pashmul) and CRICKET. The plan stressed that TF 3-06 was not to get decisively engaged. Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance systems would observe when the enemy concentrated their command and control and other resources, and then a 24-hour bombardment would take place. Phase 2B or the "Link Up", saw the deliberate clearance of Objectives RUGBY, CRICKET and LACROSSE by TF 3-06, and then clearance east to Route Comox. This would secure Pashmul and set the conditions for the establishment of governance by the Afghans. Phase 3 envisioned moving the forces to the 25 easting. Phase 4, or "Stabilization", had an Afghan National Army kandak secure the area to facilitate resettlement. Quick Impact Projects would bridge the gap until PRT-assisted development took hold. There was no mention of a role for the police, nor was there any detail on exactly who or how the area would be governed and protected.[45]

The plan to handle 'effects mitigation' in Zharey district involved LCol Hetherington and the PRT. The flow of displaced persons from the district into the city attracted the attention of the Disaster Management Committee, led by Haji Agha Lalai Dastagiri. The UN organizations in Kandahar City worked with the committee, which also had a liaison officer from the PRT. The concept that the Afghans would take the lead through existing organizations predominated as the Community Development Councils and the Provincial Development Committee were to play a significant enabling role with ad hoc Disaster Management Committee teams from the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, by contacting the Community Development Council members, and coordinating assistance locally. Various Canadian and American military aid monies were on tap to feed any reconstruction: Commanders Contingency Fund and Commanders Emergency Response Programme, specifically.[46]

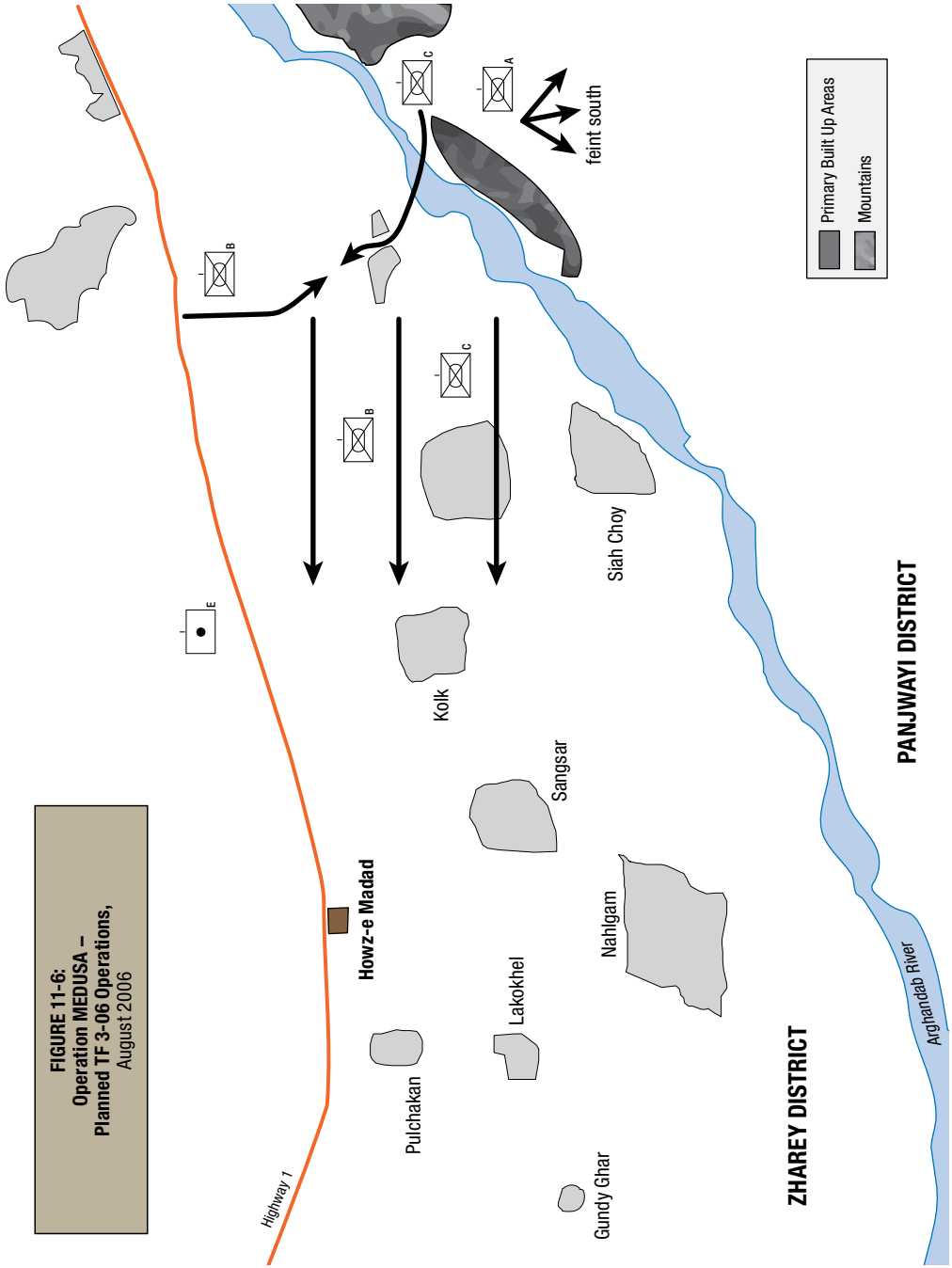


Figure 11-6: Operation MEDUSA – Planned TF 3-06 Operations, August 2006

TF 3-06 had to reposition for MEDUSA, which caused the same problems that TF Orion had when it deployed to Helmand province back in July 2006. The forward operating bases in Shah Wali Kot and in Spin Boldak needed to be protected while their infantry companies moved to Panjwayi and Zharey. The decision was made by Regional Command (South) to send elements of the RAF Regiment guarding KAF down to Spin Boldak to work with security contractors, while arrangements were made for a Dutch para company to occupy FOB Martello. Some Canadian combat engineers from 23 Field Squadron would remain at Martello. These moves took place on 25 and 28 August respectively.[47]

By this time, TF 31 had manoeuvred into southern Panjwayi district after an aerial resupply by MC-130 Combat Talon aircraft. One of the first insurgent installations they uncovered was a satellite communications system and a medical facility co-located in a merchant's shop. They also developed information that a top Taliban commander, Hafiz Majid, was nearby. The special forces troops discovered an enemy leadership order of battle, plus the methodology on how they communicated. The local population confirmed that "The Arabs," that is, Al Qaeda, were back in the country alongside the Taliban. SIGINT confirmed that there were 16 separate insurgent commanders in southern and western Panjwayi district. Usually a commander had 50 fighters under his control. This meant that the initial TF 31 intelligence estimate of 300 or 400 fighters in the district was, in the words of special operator Maj Rusty Bradley, "Wrong. Way wrong." It was at least twice that.[48] The insurgents then attacked TF 31 in a coordinated fashion, which forced the special operators to employ AC-130 gunships: "the death plane" as the Taliban called it. Maj Bradley noted that coordinated enemy action was "something that I'd never witnessed before in my three rotations to Afghanistan."[49] The implication of this was that TF 3-06 was about to attack what they thought was an estimated 500 fighters in Zharey district, but that there were possibly 800, 1000, or even more fighters in Panjwayi district to their southwest.

On 29 August 2006, Regional Command (South) issued minor changes to the MEDUSA operations order and scheduled a rehearsal of concept for the 30th. The changes included the addition of American counter-IED route clearance packages from Zabul; two Dutch PzH 2000 self-propelled guns; and the addition of A Company, 2-4th Infantry as Brigade Reserve.

Unusually, ISAF's entire senior leadership arrived at KAF for a briefing on the upcoming operation. This included Lt Gen Richards and Maj Gen Freakley; even LGen Mike Gauthier, Commander CEFCOM, showed up. BGen Fraser was on leave at this point. LCol Lavoie gave the briefing: "I walked Lt Gen Richards through the concept of operations and the scheme of manoeuvre and I always remember the last two things he said, 'Omer, if you fail, NATO fails. I'll see you on the Arghandab for tea in a month.'"[50]

On to MEDUSA....1-4 September 2006

On 1 September, Governor Asadullah Khalid announced publicly that there were going to be offensive operations in Zharey and Panjwayi districts and that the population should evacuate. This message was supported with ISAF leaflet drops throughout the area. The displaced persons flow significantly increased over the next day as columns of people moved out of the area.[51] B Company redeployed from FOB Martello to Patrol Base Wilson, while Charles Company moved into Bazaar-e Panjwayi. A Company moved to Bazaar-e Panjwayi as well. As they understood it, the infantry companies would take up positions for 72 hours and observe pattern of life, and then engage targets of opportunity if they presented themselves.[52] By this time, 23 Field Squadron had shaken out. Scrounged heavy equipment, which included a British bulldozer, an Afghan National Army bulldozer, and a rented civilian bulldozer, were expediently up-armoured or "Mad Maxed" with armour plating welded on. The wheeled Zettelmeyer earthmover and the backhoe were also "Mad Maxed."[53]

The whole operation, weeks in the making, cocked and ready to go, was suddenly interrupted on 2 September. Capt Steve MacBeth from Recce Platoon saw a "fireball in the sky" and what "looked like a transport plane" go down near the Chalghowr-Salavat area in eastern Panjwayi district. All TF 3-06 air assets including surveillance, close air support, and helicopters were re-tasked. An airliner-sized RAF Nimrod MR2 surveillance aircraft suffered a fuel leak followed by a catastrophic explosion. This particular Nimrod was equipped with a Wescam MX-15 surveillance system and had been used to support TF 42, the British SOF task force in its operations in Kandahar City. U.S. Air Force Pararescue Jumpers were overhead in their HH-60s but would not land until ground forces had secured the site. ISTAR Squadron, led by Maj Lussier, was in Waiting Area A on Route Fosters east of Bazaar-e Panjwayi champing at the bit when they watched the Nimrod crash to the east near Chalghowr. ISTAR Squadron was immediately deployed to the crash site and established itself in a 'starburst' position so that it could be secured. Priority recovery items included the black box, crew DNA, computers, and any pieces of classified paper that were scattered in the area. Recce Platoon swept around the site, picking up body parts, a "fairly ghastly job" according to Capt Macbeth, who led that effort. It wasn't until nearly a day after the assault had gone into Pashmul on 3 September that ISTAR Squadron, with its surveillance Coyotes and Recce Platoon, was relieved by the RAF Regiment at the crash site.[54]

B Company feinted down Highway 1, while A Company moved down Route Fosters east. Charles Company, 23 Field Squadron, and sniper detachments moved onto Ma'Sum Ghar across the river from Pashmul and B Company took up its positions along Highway 1. A Canadian special operations combat control team with linkages to American SOF air and artillery assets infiltrated into a position high up on Ma'Sum Ghar.[55] (See Figure 11-7)

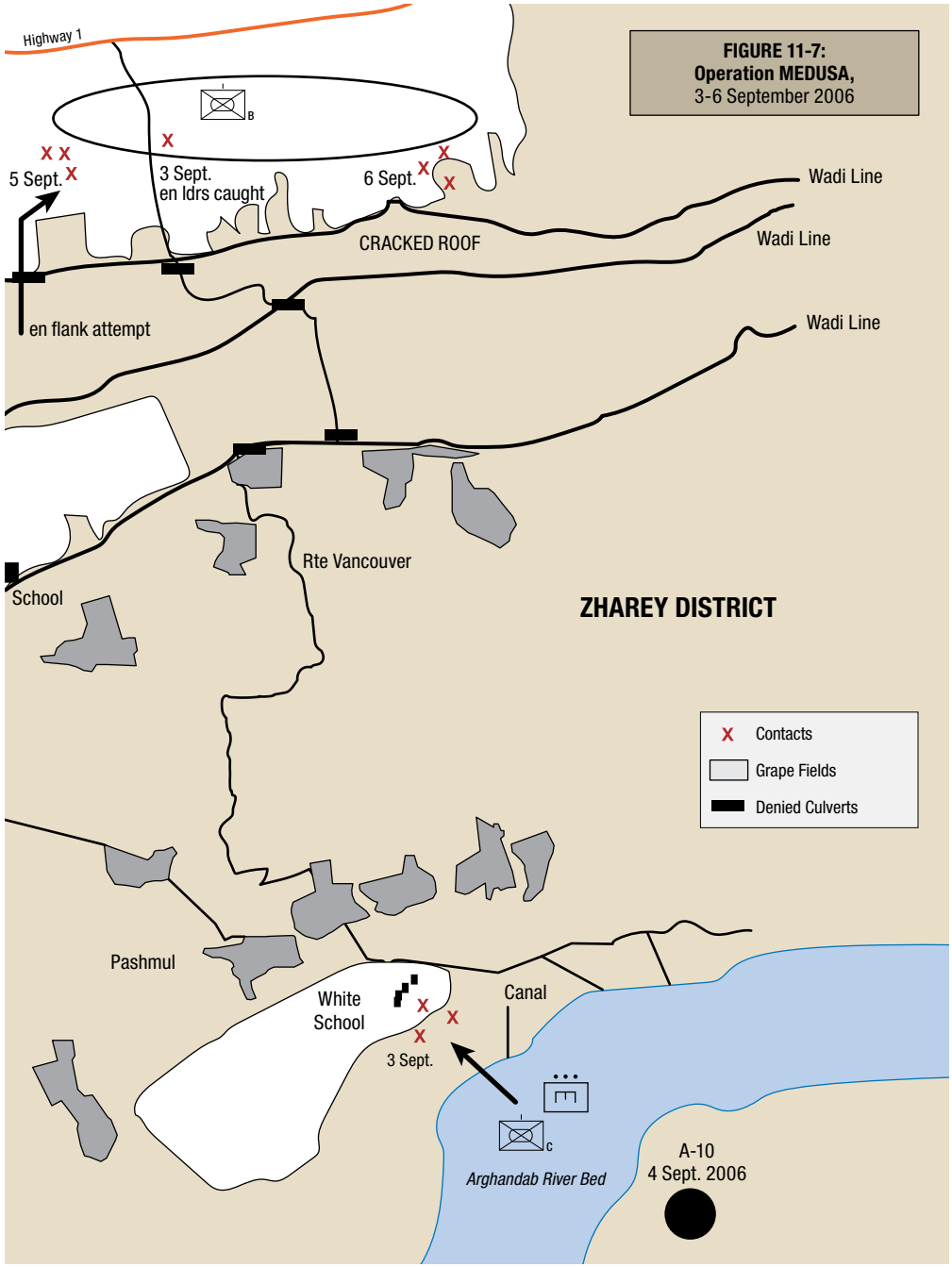


Figure 11-7: Operation MEDUSA, 3-4 September 2006

At 0615, Charles Company officer commanding Maj Sprague radioed that there was no civilian pattern of life across the river and he could see Taliban working on defensive positions. At 0630, E Battery opened up with its M-777 guns on some of its 19 pre-selected targets.[56] Combat engineers from 23 Field Squadron moved in to improve the southern approaches to the Arghandab river wadi, using their modified bulldozers to plough routes and used explosives to remove trees.[57] The idea that the feints would draw the enemy into their fighting positions so they could be pounded with artillery and air was not working. No massed enemy were observed so a planned B-1B strike with JDAMS was called off. By 1000 hours, fire discipline was imposed on E Battery due to the apparent lack of enemy response or targets. The sniper detachment at Ma'Sum Ghar, however, thought they saw the enemy using mirrors to signal each other and later observed and reported enemy movement.[58]

Early in the afternoon of 2 September, BGen Fraser, back from an artificially shortened leave, was briefed on the situation. Two factors stood out. First, the intelligence picture suggested that the enemy were not occupying Pashmul in the numbers projected by initial estimates and second, the insurgents were not being drawn into concentrations where they could be taken out economically with fires. Fraser believed that more manoeuvre-to-collect followed by bombardment would reach diminishing returns. Related to that was the fact that the allied organizations temporarily deployed to Regional Command (South) for MEDUSA could only be held in place for a limited period, possibly only seven days, before they would have to redeploy for other tasks elsewhere.[59]

Fraser then flew out to Bazaar-e Panjwayi. Meeting with LCol Lavoie, BGen Fraser told him, "Omer, I need you to go in now. Do you understand what I am asking?" This discussion turned into a heated argument between the two men. Lavoie said that he did not know where the enemy were, that it was nighttime, and that the IED threat was high. LCol Lavoie wanted another 48 hours to define where the enemy were located and bombard them. Fraser wanted the task force to cross the river and occupy Pashmul. Fraser returned to KAF, while Lavoie briefed Sprague and the rest of the sub-unit commanders.[60]

At 1600 hours, the battle group received instructions from Regional Command (South) to move to Phase 2B of the plan at 0100 hours on 3 September. The battle group requested that the bombardment be continued.[61] 7 Platoon, along with combat engineers, moved across the wadi to establish lanes but were withdrawn later in the evening.[62]

BGen Fraser, on the other hand, was under substantial pressure from multiple sources to get on with the operation. According to his staff and other officers in higher headquarters, there was pressure conveyed through Maj Gen Freakley from Lt Gen Eikenberry and even CENTCOM because Operation MEDUSA was using so many American aerial surveillance, intelligence "enablers" and close air support assets, and these could not all be fixed in one place for protracted periods. For example, the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise was off the

coast of Pakistan and could only conduct air support with its 36 F-18s for a limited window because it had to move on to other tasks. MQ-1 Predators were needed in Iraq and Pakistan as well as in Afghanistan. Then there was pressure from ISAF HQ to get in a "win" for strategic information operations effect with the Afghans and the more reticent NATO allies. There was no higher-level Canadian pressure at this point.[63]

At midnight, Fraser ordered Lavoie to accept a 0200 timing for crossing the river, but Maj Sprague then argued with LCol Lavoie over the hastiness of the operation and insisted that he needed more preparation time. There were several shouting matches over the secure radios between Bazaar-e Panjwayi and Regional Command (South) at KAF. The timing of the move shifted yet again from 0600 to 0700.[64]

The DCO Maj Martin Lipcsey, the Operations Officer Maj Jay Harvey and the TF 3-06 intelligence staff under Capt Chris Purdy expressed concerns among themselves that the battle group still did not have a clear picture of the enemy dispositions in Zharey. The TUAV sensors, for example, were unable to penetrate the heavy foliage in the Pashmul area. The water-laden marijuana plants were especially effective at concealing heat signatures.[65]

Maj Lipcsey was also unaware of Maj Sajjan's HUMINT activities. Maj Sajjan was over at Patrol Base Wilson at this point, working to gain more information on the enemy picture in Zharey, when Maj Lipscey told him the battle group was going in at 0600 on 3 September and that the enemy were not in Pashmul anymore. Sajjan asked Lipscey who had made that assessment. "The int guys," Lipcsey replied. When he looked again, Sajjan believed that this was based in part on the assessment of a master corporal in the Mobile Electronic Warfare Team. The assessment did not correspond to information collected by HUMINT sources in the Zharey area. When he asked the Mobile Electronic Warfare Team to use their communications system to pass on his concerns, the crew blocked him from entering the vehicle and refused to pass on the information or his dissenting opinion. This occurred despite the fact that LCol Erik Gjos, the Regional Command (South) G-2, had been told by BGen Fraser that Sajjan had access to the intelligence architecture.[66] U.S. Special Operations TF 31 commentary noted later that "General Fraser's intelligence about a weak, broken Taliban was wrong."[67]

It is possible that there was an over-reliance on technical systems in an attempt to gain intelligence on the enemy in Zharey district in the lead-up to 3 September 2006. Aerial systems were defeated by the dense foliage, covered streams and built-up areas.[68] SIGINT systems were defeated by the enemy's uncharacteristic use of radio silence and more traditional signal methods. HUMINT was not profitably employed. TF 3-06's ground recce capability, ISTAR Squadron, was tied up providing security to the Nimrod crash site, and, in any case, appeared to have been left out of the planning and used as a QRF. In theory, the Recce Platoon should have been conducting recce patrols on the periphery and even into the target area, while the

Coyote surveillance vehicles should have provided lateral observation to supplement aerial observation. The American information from higher-level assets and Canadian information at the tactical level, however, appeared to correlate: the enemy were no longer in Pashmul in the large numbers that earlier estimates suggested.

Charles Company, supported by 2 Troop and the heavy equipment from 23 Field Squadron, stepped off from Ma'Sum Ghar around 0630. B Company on the northern front feinted along Highway 1 and south toward the first wadi line code-named CRACKED ROOF near the Yellow School west of Pasab, trying to draw an enemy reaction. While 2 Troop uncovered an IED at the crossing point and disposed of it, E Battery opened up on suspected enemy positions around Objective RUGBY.[69] The crossing point for Charles Company was offset 200 to 300 metres to the west of the crossing point used by TF Orion on 3 August to avoid canalizing terrain.[70]

Photo Credit: Author

This aerial shot of Zharey district shows Highway 1 heading west to Helmand and clearly depicts the first and second wadi lines encountered by both TF Orion and TF 3-06 during their assaults on the district from the north in 2006.

Charles Company splayed out from the breach with 7 Platoon to the left facing the White School, 8 Platoon centre and front, and 9 Platoon right. Capt Derek Wessan's 7 Platoon, with its three LAV IIIs and an ECM G Wagon, advanced toward the White School and

halted 50 to 100 metres away as the engineers cleared a lane; there were no IEDs or mines. The enemy opened up with a concentrated RPG attack on the ECM G Wagon destroying the vehicle and killing WO Frank Nolan. The entire area erupted with fire as the enemy then targeted the right-flanking LAV III. 7 Platoon returned fire with its 25mm cannons, while other LAV IIIs, including 23 Field Squadron vehicles in over-watch from as far back as Ma'Sum Ghar, sought out targets and engaged. One LAV III crew on the Ghar took out 12 insurgents by keeping its 25mm cannon aimed at a gap between two buildings that the enemy had to use to get into the fight. Then 7 Platoon's left-flank LAV III's 25mm cannon stopped firing after six rounds; the crew commander's headset wires had been pulled into the feed mechanism, jamming it. The enemy then concentrated fire on the LAV III as it backed up. Its crew used its coaxial machine gun in response. Then the vehicle bogged down. The crew abandoned it and moved to the casualty collection point, which was set up behind the Zettelmeyer earthmover.[71]

A LAV III from 2 Troop moved up to assist 7 Platoon with suppressive fire; an enemy 82mm recoilless rifle targeted it. The round penetrated the turret, killing Sgt Shane Stachnik and wounding his gunner. The vehicle was still mobile, however. Back at the site of Nolan's G Wagon, Sgt Scott Fawcett, Cpl Jason Funnell and Pte Michael O'Rourke dashed out of their LAV III to the heavily damaged vehicle. Working with Cpl Sean Teal, Fawcett provided suppressive fire while O'Rourke and Funnel moved the wounded from the G Wagon to their LAV III under heavy enemy fire. Cpl Teal was awarded the Star of Military Valour for his actions, while Sgt Fawcett, MCpl Niefer, Cpl Funnell and Pte O'Rourke received the Medal of Military Valour.

The other two platoons poured fire back at the insurgents from their positions opposite theirs while a high volume of machine gun and RPG fire descended on them from precisely the same positions encountered by TF Orion on 3 August to the north of the crossing site, behind the walled fields and tall grass at the crossroads. The snipers on Ma'Sum Ghar could see the enemy firing from loopholes in the walls.[72] Special operations forces observers saw that the insurgents were forcing the few remaining civilians in the area out into the open at gunpoint "as shields against airstrikes."[73]

To the north, B Company continued with its cordon mission, itching to get into the fight. Maj Abthorpe moved the company and feinted toward the south, then pulled back to the road, and then feinted in elsewhere. His tactical psychological operations team, manning a checkpoint, grabbed four local Taliban leaders as they were fleeing the area.[74]

Back in Pashmul, an enemy recoilless rifle team manoeuvred and then engaged the Zettelmeyer earthmover and the casualty collection point with an SPG-9, killing WO Frank Mellish and Pte William Cushley and wounding eight personnel. To confuse matters further, an aircraft came in to provide close air support but dropped its bombs next

to Maj Sprague and his company command post, shaking things up. Another G Wagon, brought in to recover the ECM G Wagon, got stuck in a ditch. After hours of trying to recover it, it was eventually blown in place. Cpl Clinton Orr from 23 Field Squadron drove his bulldozer over to the bogged LAV III and tried to extricate it under fire. He was unable to do so and the bulldozer sustained numerous hits. He was forced to withdraw. He was later awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions. Corporal Joseph Ruffolo, whose vehicle it was, exposed himself to enemy fire to assist with the extrication. He too was awarded the Medal of Military Valour.

The order was given to withdraw to the riverbed. Close air support and artillery pounded the enemy perimeter as Bison ambulances arrived to get the wounded. Charles Company and 2 Troop extricated themselves with four dead and 10 wounded, leaving four destroyed vehicles in the kill zone. U.S. Army helicopters arrived to evacuate the wounded to the Role 3 hospital in KAF. The force then pulled back to positions at Ma'Sum Ghar and Bazaar-e Panjwayi, using fire and movement to break contact.[75] An airstrike was called in to destroy the bogged LAV III but it missed and hit the disabled Zettelmeyer instead.[76]

Photo Credit: Courtesy LCol Geoff Abthorpe

Canadian M-777 artillery from E Battery pounds insurgent positions in Zharey district with airburst high-explosive rounds.

As night descended, Charles Company and 23 Field Squadron sorted themselves out in the battle positions at and around Ma'Sum Ghar. The sniper detachments continued with observation of Pashmul and saw the blue flame of a cutting torch under the hull of the

stricken LAV III across the river. This was the insurgency's version of technical exploitation and may have played a role in the evolution of enemy IEDs later on. The CANSOF combat control team and U.S. Special Forces ODA 333 then joined the snipers in an attempt to maintain observation and engage targets using American fire assets. Several High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) missile strikes took place that night against leadership targets and sites as the enemy massed to celebrate their victory. The Afghan National Army company then got on the insurgent's radio net and started insulting them. This impromptu PSYOPS went on all night.[77] Maj Gen Freakley called Fraser after the ninth HIMARS and cut Regional Command (South) off as they were using up the in-theatre stocks: "It was like 'dial a HIMARS' day. Aegis fired more HIMARS than the 101st in the attack from Kuwait to Mosul!"[78]

Fraser then met with Lavoie and told him to get his forces into Objective RUGBY the next day. Lavoie and his company commanders met and planned a feint east of the objective with Charles Company. The concept was to probe the enemy and identify their positions, and then launch the main attack against them.[79]

The night bombardment produced fires north of the Arghandab River and some in the morning. Some compounds were still smoldering from the HIMARS strikes. Charles Company was waking up and eating in the open area, near a small compound on Ma'Sum Ghar dubbed Battle Position 301; a fire was lit and the garbage from the MRE and IMP rations was piled in and burned when the morning meal was completed. A Canadian joint terminal air controller was at this time observing and engaging targets of opportunity across the river. The team sighted enemy movement near one of the burning buildings and requested that a U.S. Air Force A-10 on station engage them. At about 0528 hours, the A-10 came over Ma'Sum Ghar from the south. The pilot had just removed his night vision goggles because of the change in the light; he mistook the plume of smoke from the burning garbage as the burning building he was directed to attack, and opened up with his 30mm GAU-8 Gatling gun. The rounds hit Charles Company, killing Pte Mark Graham and wounding 35 other Canadian soldiers, including Maj Sprague.[80]

Every Canadian soldier with medical training descended on the strike site, including the CANSOF members. The Dragoons from ISTAR Squadron who had Tactical Combat Casualty Care training established a casualty collection point and relayed information up the chain using ISTAR Squadron's radio net. Two U.S. Army UH-60s swooped in to get the eight most seriously injured, while an Australian CH-47 Chinook helicopter with medical personnel from the Role 3 lifted off from KAF. E Battery shifted its fires and laid a smoke screen between Ma'Sum Ghar and the Arghandab River. One of the incoming CH-47s almost landed on the wrong side of the screen and was hurriedly brought on to the landing site before the enemy could engage it.[81]

Photo Credit: DND AR2006-P008-0030

The Operation MEDUSA 'gun line' north of Highway 1. A pair of Dutch Panzerkanone and a Canadian M-777 gun are overflown by a pair of UH-60s and an AH-64 attack helicopter.

Almost forgotten was a small group of Canadian engineers, gunners from E Battery with their mortars, and the Dutch para company up at FOB Martello in Shah Wali Kot district, which came under sustained small arms, mortar and RPG attack on 4 and 5 September 2006. A combination of Dutch 30mm fire from their mechanized infantry combat vehicles and Canadian 81mm mortar fire staved off assaults on the forward operating base until the Dutch could bring in reinforcements via an air assault with their CH-47 helicopters. Post-battle damage assessments estimated the enemy attacking force at 100 fighters, who used coordinated measures to assault the forward operating base with fire, manoeuvre and indirect fire support. The Canadians could only find 10 corpses that were left behind by the insurgents, so it was difficult to gain a full account of how much damage was inflicted on the enemy.[82]

Operation MEDUSA was now very firmly stopped in its tracks as Fraser ordered a temporary cessation of combat operations. Charles Company had a leadership deficit with the company commander and company sergeant major wounded, two warrant officers killed and two more warrant officers wounded. The acting company sergeant major was now Sgt Scott Fawcett, while Capt Steve Brown received a battlefield promotion to major to take over the company.[83]

The cumulative number of the casualties over the course of both days, and the fact that this was the second time in the war that the U.S. Air Force killed and wounded significant numbers of Canadian soldiers by accident now had far-reaching strategic effects. First, the

A-10 incident could play into the hands of those who opposed the mission and could be used to activate underlying anti-Americanism in Canada, with negative repercussions for the elected government. Second, there were concerns the incident would scare off possible NATO-member troop contributors, though the Europeans were not exactly lining up to join the fight in the south. In contrast to the 2002 incident, "The American pilot beat himself up pretty badly over it. He was a very religious man and was devastated….There was no repeat here of the arrogance that all of us in Canada perceived in Maj Harry Schmidt," according to the CDS. The pilot's superior told the CDS that "There's nothing the U.S. Air Force could do to him that would be nearly as bad as what he's doing to himself over this."[84]

Canadian officers in higher headquarters were inundated with Americans expressing anguish, "guys who were in tears that this had happened." One officer "had probably 100 Americans come up to me including all of the one-stars and the two-stars apologizing for what happened."[85] Canadian staff in Kabul had to explain to their American counterparts that there was a possibility that the incident could result in a non-confidence vote back in Canada and that the government might collapse, with serious detrimental effects to the coalition effort in Afghanistan. Canadian superiors told their officers that "if we have another multiple casualty day, the government might fall and we may get pulled out of theatre."[86]

Photo Credit: Courtesy LCol Geoff Abthorpe

During Operation MEDUSA 1 RCR overran enemy positions which were professionally sited and dug in. This was one position before overhead cover could be applied.

Task Force 31 and the Battle for Sperwan Ghar, 3-5 September 2006

After TF 31 reached southern Panjwayi district, the four ODAs and their associated Afghan National Army companies (really large reinforced platoons) moved onto the Akhyond Seheb Ghar feature to observe the valley. Capt Prohar counted over 400 people, non-fighting-age males, evacuating the area. The Sperwan and Zangabad areas were devoid of civilians "but full of bad guys." The initial plan was for TF 31 to proceed north to establish a blocking position on the Arghandab River so that any insurgents withdrawing southwest from the 1 RCR battle group assault would be destroyed.[87] The ODA commanders monitoring events to the north through their deployed teams in Panjwayi district concluded that the sizable enemy force there could tip the balance if it slammed into the back of TF 3-06's sub-units that were facing Pashmul. The three ODA team leaders passed their concerns to Lt Col Bolduc, who approved of their plan to seize the high ground at a place called Sperwan Ghar so that TF 31 could dominate the western end of Panjwayi district and call fires down on any enemy movement north. As TF 31 advanced in line abreast on the Sperwan Ghar feature (Objective BILLIARDS) on 3 September, it came under fire from enemy forces from north, south and east. The three ODAs boldly drove through a mined area in an attempted *coup de main* on Sperwan Ghar – the school, and other buildings, as it turned out, were loaded with insurgents and a protracted gun battle erupted before the hill could be gained. Running low on ammunition, TF 31 withdrew under cover of A-10s and Dutch AH-64 gunships. The proverbial hornet's nest had been shaken: intelligence assessments concluded that there were, at the least, several hundred, and possibly up to 1000 insurgents in the area.[88] (See Figure 11-8)

Photo Credit: Author

This picture, taken from the communities south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi facing southwest, highlights the importance of the Sperwan Ghar feature. In 2006, coalition forces fought to retain control of this feature and subsequently, a patrol base was established on and around it. Due to an optical illusion, the Registan Desert appears to loom above Panjwayi district.

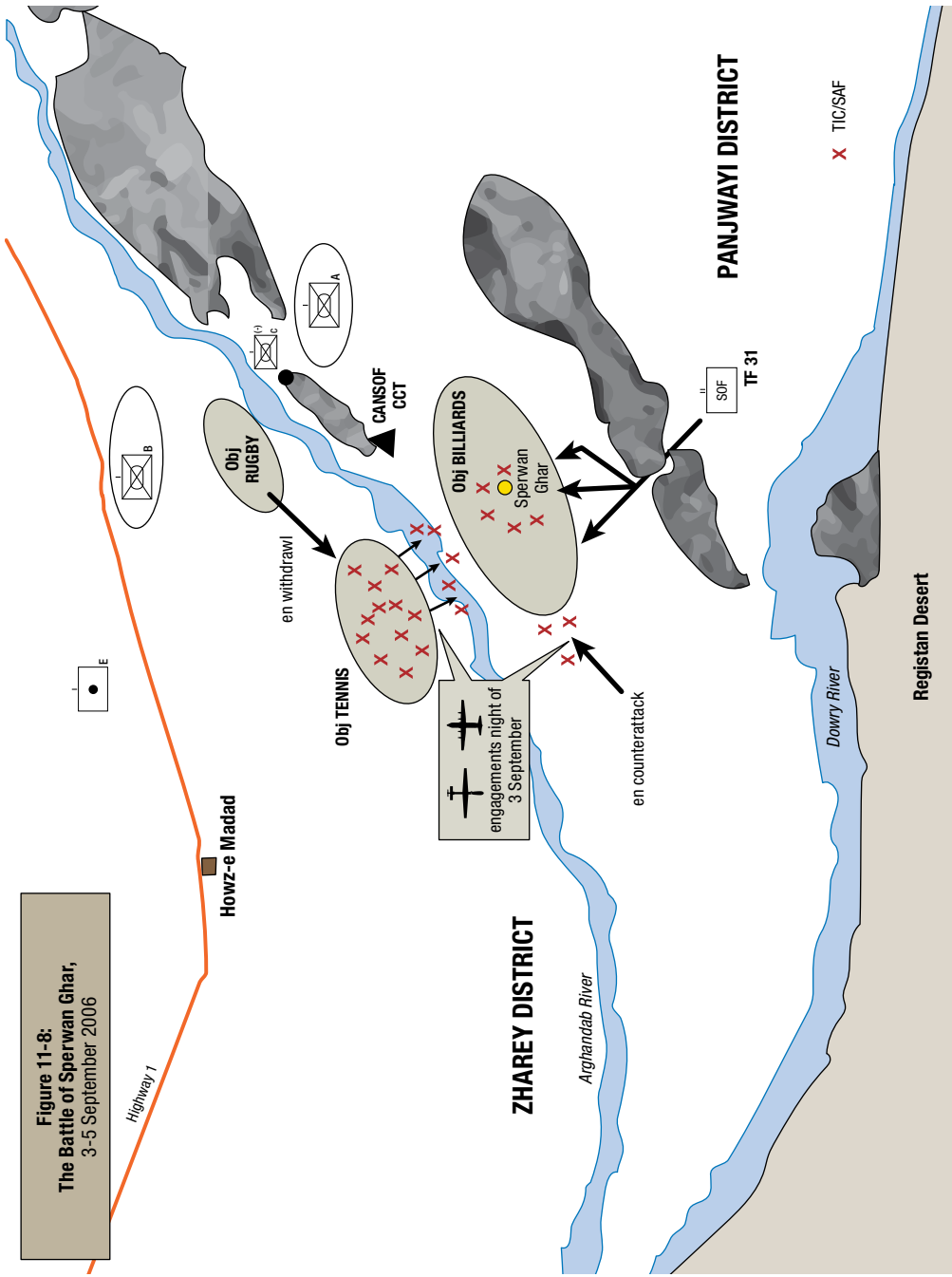


Figure 11-8: The Battle of Sperwan Ghar, 3-5 September 2006

TF 31's intelligence apparatus heard the Taliban calling back to Quetta for more fighters while the ODAs and their Afghan counterparts resupplied. The decision was made to go back in at 0500 the next morning, clear the school, and seize the hill. Under the unblinking eyes of MQ-1 Predators, TF 31 ODAs and the Afghans went back in and fought for the position in a desperate battle that lasted 13 hours. A major coordinated Taliban counterattack involving nearly 100 fighters was stopped in its tracks by a pair of A-10s dropping munitions danger close and generating large numbers of enemy casualties. The Taliban commanders in the area called for additional fighters from north of the river in Zharey. That night, AC-130 gunships orbited Sperwan Ghar, eliminating further enemy concentrations. Sensitive site exploitation at the school generated intelligence on enemy leadership locations, including Mullah Omar and Mullah Dadullah Lang. Special operations forces assets elsewhere targeted these locations. By this point, ODA 333 joined the Canadians at Ma'Sum Ghar and were able to provide observation south toward Sperwan Ghar and call fires down on any enemy movement. TF 31 had, after two days of operations, taken 12 wounded, one killed and had six vehicles disabled.[89]

The fight was on for the next 24 hours as the .50 caliber machine guns on the vehicles used plunging fire to kill insurgents before they could get into small arms range, and F-18s from the American aircraft carrier bombed and strafed around TF 31. Insurgents mounted in groups of Toyota SUVs across the river in Zharey also came under fire as they tried to reinforce enemy efforts. As TF 31 looked for room to manoeuvre, their EOD personnel discovered nearly every building in Sperwan Ghar and Zangabad they traversed was rigged with booby traps. JDAMS were called in to destroy these buildings.[90]

The enemy consisted of hundreds of personnel who were not 'aggrieved farmers.' Observers with TF 31 noted that "They were using modern conventional tactics. They were using fire and movement. They were trying to outflank us with [groups of] 12-15 men…they had chest rigs and AK-47s."[91]

On the night of 3 September 2006, TF 31 observed movement in Objective TENNIS. Groups of five Toyota trucks loaded with armed fighters arrived in TENNIS while others were observed moving to Zangabad, trying to surround TF 31 on Sperwan Ghar. AC-130s and carrier-based fighter-bombers were directed at the enemy forces as they tried to cross from TENNIS and attack BILLIARDS. As the American wounded mounted, Capt Prohar took over as second-in-command, working with the joint tactical air controllers directing airstrikes as waves of insurgents assaulted Sperwan Ghar. He was later awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions. Between 200 and 300 insurgents were killed that night in this area: at least this was the number of relatively intact bodies left on the battlefield that could be counted on the MQ-1 Predator imagery, so the number of wounded was likely much higher.[92] Another 20 insurgents were killed as they tried to manoeuvre on the

Sperwan Ghar position. Taliban sources in Quetta admitted to 300 dead, and the hospitals on the other side of the Durand Line were flooded with hundreds of wounded. The fighting continued on and around the hill until 5 September, when the enemy temporarily backed off.[93]

Freakley's promised reinforcements – C Company from 2-87 Infantry, more Afghan National Army troops and an additional ODA equipped with Gatling guns mounted on Hummers – arrived just in time for TF 31 to clear Objective BILLIARDS north of Sperwan Ghar to the river in order to set TF 31 up for the move on Objective TENNIS. The 2-87 Company was to the left and an Afghan company with its ETT was to the right facing north. C Company moved out and was ambushed nearly immediately, and the Afghan National Army started taking fire from the northeast. Observers on the Ghar noted that "it looked like fire ants pouring out of a great mound" as 50 Taliban fighters hit the Americans and Afghans. One American ETT was killed and three Afghans wounded. Copious amounts of artillery and close air support were used against insurgent locations, and this was only the start. The insurgents now renewed their efforts to take Sperwan Ghar.[94]

The Afghans and Americans advanced to clear to the northeast and to the south. A huge firefight erupted to the northeast when the Afghan troops ran into a kill zone of three machine guns hidden in three buildings. The Americans and Afghan National Army held and fought back. The insurgents then manoeuvred, trying to flank the coalition forces, until AH-64 attack helicopters got on station and disrupted their movements. And, to everyone's surprise, they were hit with airburst RPG rounds. The snipers on the hill then saw the insurgent logistics and resupply system in action. Civilian pickup trucks in relay would drop off the enemy reinforcements and shuttle the wounded out. The snipers watched as the enemy deployed nearly an entire reserve company this way to augment the fight while it was in progress. At other times, the enemy probed the Sperwan Ghar perimeter in clockwise fashion with a platoon-sized unit, trying to find a weak spot to exploit. This high level of coordination was surprising to many observers.[95]

Over the course of the two days, TF 31 and its augmentees used enough firepower to wear down the insurgents, who eventually retreated under constant bombardment from U.S. Navy F-18s and 105mm guns during the day and AC-130 gunships at night. Approximate coalition casualties were four dead and 12 wounded. The number of enemy casualties were difficult to confirm but was probably around 200.[96] Sperwan Ghar remained in coalition hands.

A platoon of Afghans and part of an American ODA moved toward the Arghandab River, hoping to gain an observation position on the high ground to disrupt cross-river movement when a substantial number of Taliban engaged them. Cut off, the group managed to act as 'flypaper' for close air support as the insurgents were drawn in while trying to capture the team, and killed; with them out of the way, TF 31 was now set to move on to Objective TENNIS.[97]

The effects of TF 31's assault and seizure of Sperwan Ghar were dramatic. First, hundreds of enemy fighters in Panjwayi district were prevented from joining the fight in Zharey or from attacking TF 3-06 directly in Ma'Sum Ghar and Bazaar-e Panjwayi. Second, it drew in fighters from Zharey district right before TF 3-06 re-cocked and headed back into Pashmul. Regional Command (South), however, was faced with a new problem. The battle was no longer confined to Zharey district, and Sperwan Ghar could not be abandoned. Were there enough forces to clear Zharey, hold it, and hold Panjwayi district?

MEDUSA Reloaded: Back into Zharey District

According to TF 3-06's DCO Maj Martin Lipscey, Capt Macbeth's Recce Platoon "kept us in the game" with night patrols into Zharey district after the disastrous events of 3 and 4 September 2006. The first patrol went into enemy territory on 5 September looking for routes south from Highway 1 into eastern Zharey district. TF 3-06, according to Capt Macbeth, badly needed "Brown SA [situational awareness]" that is, a better understanding of the specifics of the ground for trafficability as opposed to interpreting lines on a map. Overhead imagery was not always useful; sometimes walls looked like roads and things that did not look passable, were in fact passable. LCol Lavoie's concern was that if the teams were too small "people would get caught and their heads cut off on YouTube," so there was plenty of coordination and protection. Predators and TUAV, for example, were able to identify enemy on compound roofs so that the patrols could bypass them.[98]

During this time, ISTAR Squadron and the remains of Charles Company interdicted enemy movements in Zharey by essentially shooting at anything that moved; a heavy weapons detachment from an Afghan National Army kandak with American ETTs joined them and were able to provide intelligence from their Icom scanners. This led to operations whereby Icom 'chatter' was located and targeted, and any enemy personnel responding to handle casualties were also targeted. Once an insurgent commander inquired about the status of his personnel, he was then hit with artillery or an air strike.[99]

Regional Command (South) and TF 3-06 were now working on their next moves. It is important to note here that Regional Command (South) also had to deal with several other provinces while MEDUSA was underway. By this point, it was evident to Fraser and his intelligence and operations staffs that the Taliban leadership was pouring everything it had into Zharey and Panjwayi districts. Taliban fighters from all of the provinces in Regional Command (South) were converging on the area, as were fighters coming in from Pakistan. That state of affairs afforded Fraser two opportunities. The first was to use this convergence to smash Mullah Dadullah Lang's large-scale operation and generate large-scale psychological effects on the Afghan population in Kandahar as well as on the Quetta Shura.

The second was to use this opportunity to firmly establish the British position in Helmand and the Dutch in Oruzgan. The provincial task forces were instructed to surge out, connect with the population, and make headway with security and development efforts.[100]

As a result, the Helmand task force mounted Operations KADU, KUKRI, and MELA into the outlying populated areas of Musa Qala, Now Zad and Garmsir. The Dutch launched Operation ALEXANDER into the Chora Valley up in Oruzgan. The Americans and Romanians in Zabul did the same. The enemy response was a flurry of ineffective indirect fire attacks in four locations in Helmand, an ambush in Zabul and a contact in Oruzgan. Unfortunately, the insurgents moved on the Garmsir district centre and the Afghans, once again, abandoned it as they had in July.[101]

Back in Kandahar, the initial assessment of the enemy situation west of Kandahar City was that coalition indirect fire efforts in Zharey district from 3 to 4 September had killed 123 enemy personnel. More importantly, however, five identified enemy commanders had been targeted and killed and another two seriously wounded by a variety of means including HIMARS rockets. There were an estimated 120-200 enemy personnel remaining in the Siah Choy/Pashmul/Pasab triangle.[102]

LCol Lavoie, toting his kit, returned to KAF by helicopter to meet with BGen Fraser as he thought he might be relieved of command. His instincts were correct, as there was substantial pressure from higher-level commanders for that course of action. After a hard conversation between the two men, Fraser asked Lavoie if he was with him and if so, what he thought the next course of action should be. Lavoie said that yes, he was with him and pulled out a map with a proposed course of action. Fraser made the decision to keep the 1 RCR commanding officer in the fight. This was, in his view, a strategic decision based on information operations perceptions regarding the enemy and Afghan allies, as well as psychological factors related to the continued operational effectiveness of TF 3-06.[103]

Fraser and Lavoie came up with a new plan consisting of two sequential feints: one south from Highway 1, and another north from Ma'Sum Ghar/Bazaar-e Panjwayi. The feints would be timed one hour apart, with no decisive engagement. The engineers would breach in from the river. The idea was to force the enemy to move so they could be targeted with artillery and close air support.[104] The planning specifically addressed the requirements to establish stability and reconstruction "behind bounds," as well as the need for information operations.[105] (See Figure 11-9)

Higher-level pressure was re-applied to get on with the mission. As a result modifications were made so that a force from the north would push south after the feints, the southern force would cross the river, breach in, link up and clear to the west. Regional Command (South) therefore had to re-orient its forces. The Danish Recce Platoon moved to screen Highway 1 with elements of ISTAR Squadron. Dismounted patrols continued south of the road to the first wadi line and sometimes beyond.

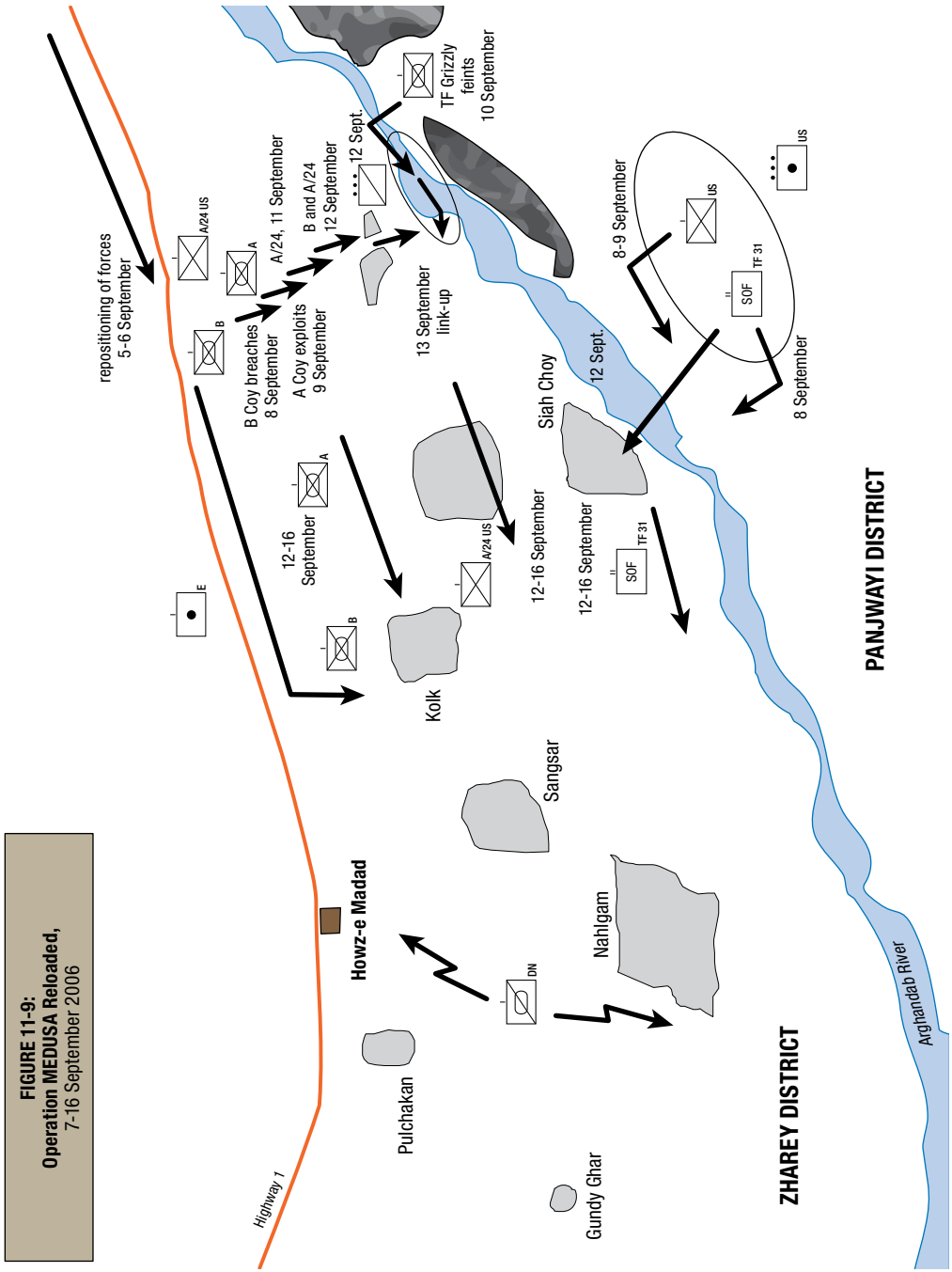


Figure 11-9: Operation MEDUSA Reloaded, 7-16 September 2006

TF 31 was being augmented, courtesy of Maj Gen Freakley who paid a surprise visit to Sperwan Ghar and asked what they needed. A company of Hummer-mounted infantry, C Company from 2-87 Infantry in Regional Command (East) drove down to Panjwayi while two 105mm guns were flown in. The concept that TF 31 would clear Objective BILLIARDS as part of the renewed effort now took shape. Another American infantry company, A Company, 2-4 Infantry, came into play and moved into Patrol Base Wilson. This left TF 3-06. A Company, plus the bulk of 23 Field Squadron and the guns, shifted to the northern front at Patrol Base Wilson. B Company was already screening along the first wadi line, south of the road. Charles Company was mostly *hors de combat*.[106]

BGen Fraser determined that a deliberate deception operation would facilitate the seizure of eastern Zharey district from the north. As a result, Col Steve Williams, the American NCE commander, formed a scratch company from his headquarters. A platoon from Charles Company, a Canadian psychological operations detachment, and part of ISTAR Squadron joined them to become TF Grizzly. They proceeded to Bazaar-e Panjwayi. TF Coyote, a Dutch company operating at the western end of the Highway 1 length in Zharey, would disrupt south and secure the highway to stop the enemy from escaping along the route.[107]

B Company had been in its positions for several days and Maj Abthorpe made the decision to dig in. His company had been engaged with recoilless rifles on 5 September, once the enemy realized there were available targets to their north. One LAV III was hit, producing five wounded. B Company applied all the firepower it had plus that of a Dutch AH-64, and burned down the school killing an estimated 20 enemy. On the night of 6 September, the insurgents tried to flank B Company with patrols: "We would send out the clearance patrols in the morning to check the trip wires on our flanks and they were all cut or missing…we never picked them up with all of our technology." Eventually the enemy slipped up and six were taken out with 25mm fire.[108]

Orders were given for the advance during a meeting on 7 September. While LCol Lavoie and Maj Abthorpe were at KAF receiving them, a B Company clearance patrol operating along the first wadi line (code-named CRACKED ROOF) found an IED factory and drug lab. When forces were brought in to secure it, the company second-in-command Capt Max Michaud-Shields moved the company forward. This inadvertently triggered the advance, which forced DCO Maj Lipcsey to take control of the battle group until the rest of the leadership could return from KAF. The first phase line, CRACKED ROOF, was taken without incident on 8 September as a result.[109]

The inadvertent seizure of CRACKED ROOF took the entire chain of command by surprise. The imposition of artificial lines on a map had a tendency to become a psychological barrier the more removed planners were from the terrain and the battle. CRACKED ROOF

was not some heavily fortified Maginot Line, yet there was tendency to think that it was in some quarters in Kabul (note that this tendency would repeat itself time and time again in the Canadian area of operations during the course of the war).

The clearance of eastern Zharey district was a deliberate and methodical conventional-style operation. Maj Mark Gasparotto summed up the process:

> We would fix the enemy with direct and indirect fires (including Close Air Support) while dismounted infantry supported by combat engineers would clear the vineyards and compounds out to 300m (effective RPG range). Often my sappers would create mouse holes in the compound walls with explosive satchel charges. These holes allowed the infantry to enter without going through possibly booby-trapped doorways. Then the dozers would breach a lane through the vineyards, connecting open areas, thus allowing the LAVs to move forward and link up with the dismounts. Once that bound was secure then the Route Clearance Package would clear Route COMOX to allow for resupply….at night recce patrols would scout forward of the front line and infantry companies would send out raiding parties to disrupt Taliban operations.[110]

On 9 September 2006, A Company passed through B Company's positions on CRACKED ROOF and established themselves at the second wadi line. Intelligence indicated that "the enemy was short on rations, medical supplies, and ammunition."[111] LCol Lavoie recalled "getting onto that first objective in the morning and it was a bit disgusting. You could see parts of heads and shapes like that, things the enemy did not have time to clean up, lots of blood trails but we're not finding bodies intact."[112] Resistance lessened as the forces drove south and both companies consolidated their positions and put out patrols. Recce Platoon had significant contacts each night as the forces progressed south but there were no heavy weapons emplaced to stop the 'Mad Max' bulldozers as they ploughed what would eventually become the basis of Route SUMMIT. [113]

The next day, 10 September, TF Grizzly conducted a feint:

> Colonel [Steve] Williams directed the [PSYOPS] team to begin broadcasting across the river that 'the American Colonel is here to kill you, not the Canadians. We are going to come across the river and kill you.' TF Grizzly also directed White Phosphorus artillery fire on the river bank which ignited brush fires, followed by PSYOPS announcements that the Americans were going to burn the Taliban up…. The PSYOPS team played loud music, such as AC/DC's 'Back in Black', accompanied by heavy fire across the river from LAV-mounted 25mm cannon….The repetition of the music, accompanied by the cannon fire, was intended to induce the enemy to associate the loud music with the cannon fire so they would hunker down when the music began.[114]

B Company then moved on to Objective TEMPLER early that morning, while A Company, 2-4 Infantry prepared to move onto Objective CROSSBOW. After another night of recce patrols, the American infantry company took CROSSBOW on the morning of 11 September, while A Company secured a crossroads that led to Objective LACROSSE.[115]

Col Williams wanted to get across the Arghandab with his composite task force as soon as possible, but the remnants of C Company that were attached balked at the ad hoc crossing operation, which they viewed as not well thought out, and were deeply concerned about the provision of American fire support after the A-10 incident. Col Williams wanted the Canadians to obey his orders immediately. Maj Lussier intervened, understanding that there was a serious crisis of confidence with C Company, and that browbeating from a non-Canadian would be counterproductive. There would be a deliberate crossing at night with proper recce to make sure there were no IEDs waiting on the opposite bank.[116]

A night patrol with engineers cleared the bank, TF Grizzly crossed over and was into the eastern part of Objective RUGBY by 0830. There, they found an incredible number of body parts strewn everywhere, even in the trees. Nothing was left alive. Checkpoints and command posts were blown apart, and the detritus of a fleeing army was in evidence as the Canadians and Americans swept through the area. There was unexploded ordnance all over the entire objective. Recce Platoon emerged from their concealed positions and linked up with TF Grizzly.[117] Further examination uncovered "the actual fighting positions…it looked like the same thing we would do. It looked like classic trenches, in-depth, especially with communications trenches, the same way we would envision a Soviet [company-sized] position."[118]

Col Steve Williams asked BGen Fraser permission to continue the advance through RUGBY. This was granted and TF Grizzly cleared west almost to Objective TENNIS. On the evening of 12 September 2006, A Company, 2-4 Infantry, a LAV platoon from B Company, and an engineer troop passed through A Company and moved into LACROSSE. B Company continued to consolidate in CRICKET, while Recce Platoon went into Objective RUGBY that night. By 13 September 2006, the formal link up between Lavoie and Williams had occurred and the consolidation in RUGBY took place.[119]

There was not a lot of enemy contact during this phase of the operation. Critics at the time, specifically American critics, believed that the methodical nature of this phase of the operation was ponderous and allowed the enemy to escape. Some even derisively referred to MEDUSA as "CANACONDA" with reference to the problematic 2002 American-led battle in Shah-i-Kot Valley. At one point Maj Gen Freakley, who had substantial experience as a mentor at the U.S. Army National Training Center, arrived on the scene, and attempted to coach LCol Lavoie into increasing the pace of the operation.[120] Apparently, Freakley asked Lavoie if he had read the Bible, to which a perplexed Lavoie replied, not lately.

Freakley told Lavoie that he was acting as Saint Paul the Encourager. Lavoie replied that if that was so, then Lavoie was Saint Thomas the Doubter. LCol Lavoie chose to proceed methodically and BGen Fraser supported him in this.[121]

There were other factors to consider, however. TF 31 was heavily engaged in Objective BILLIARDS at this time and had to delay its move on to Objective TENNIS.[122] By 7 September, TF 31's sub-units repositioned on Objective BILLIARDS facing TENNIS, and mounted disruption patrols in the area. These moves generated a series of contacts throughout the area that over a two-day period resulted in 150 enemy killed in direct fire confrontations and another 110 killed by mortars, artillery or air support.[123]

The inability of the Dutch company and Danish recce unit to move in and block to the west in central Zharey, due to their restrictive national caveats preventing them from engaging in combat,[124] coupled with this delay, probably facilitated the withdrawal of the remaining insurgent fighters that were about to be trampled by the Canadian and American forces moving inexorably from north to south and east to west.[125] The limitations of using aerial observation linked to fires as an economy of force method to block enemy movements in dense terrain like Zharey were becoming apparent but had not yet been codified. However, the possibility that the MEDUSA operation simply annihilated the bulk of the forward-deployed insurgent forces in both districts, and that there were very few unscathed fighters left to escape, should be considered.

Most importantly, however, were the constant demands by ISAF HQ to publicly announce the establishment of the ADZ in Kandahar. The MEDUSA plan specifically catered to effects mitigation, reconstruction, and then development. Rushing a battle group through the terrain in the manoeuverist pursuit of the insurgents was all well and good. However, if the areas where the battle group passed through were not cleared of unexploded ordnance and IEDs, and all insurgents and their infrastructure were not rooted out (bunkers blown up, trenches filled in, caches found and destroyed), then the enemy would just flow back in when the coalition forces left and interfere with the reconstruction process. The coalition would be back to square one. There could be no ADZ in Kandahar without the methodical clearance and holding of Zharey district. This is something the critics did not address in their haste to denigrate the Canadian task force.

Operation MEDUSA: 12-30 September 2006

TF 31 became the Brigade main effort on 12 September. That day TF 31 launched half of its forces across the Arghandab River to clear Objective TENNIS while the other half secured Objective BILLIARDS. Once across, the forces engaged a small group of

insurgents, killing them. The special forces also found piles of "weapons, radios, phones, and bodies…indicating Taliban fighters departing the objective in a panic."[126] Further exploitation uncovered IED caches and documents in Arabic.

The final dispositions of the coalition forces as of 13 September had most of an Afghan kandak occupying Bazaar-e Panjwayi; A Company was in RUGBY EAST, with B Company in RUGBY CENTRE, and TF Grizzly in RUGBY WEST. A Company, 2-4 Infantry departed Objective LACROSSE and headed for Route Comox for a flank security task. Exploitation of RUGBY uncovered defensive positions and a tunnel complex.[127] 23 Field Squadron also unearthed several pressure-plate IEDs and discovered Italian TC-6 plastic anti-tank mines set up as triple stacks. During the course of the clearance, 23 Field Squadron's D-7 dozer detonated a large IED, disabling it. Other deep buried mine stacks were discovered in the vicinity of the crossing point and from there back to the White School; Canadian equipment did not detect them and they were later found by accident.[128]

Over the next day and half, the forces repositioned in preparation for Phase 3. A Company departed for Waiting Area MOUNTAIN, A Company, 2-4 Infantry moved to RUGBY WEST, TF Grizzly to RUGBY EAST. B Company withdrew to Highway 1, moved west, and then south down Route Victoria in the vicinity of the Gundy Ghar feature to establish blocking positions. They encountered no resistance. Recce Platoon moved to handle route security on Highway 1. TF 31 remained in TENNIS and the Afghans with their ETTs remained in Bazaar-e Panjwayi. There was little or no contact throughout this period, even by B Company.[129]

On the morning of 15 September, A Company stepped off heading west clearing along Route St Johns, while A Company, 2-4 Infantry did the same paralleling on Route Ottawa. TF 31's area of operations was south of A Company, 2-4 Infantry's, and their ODAs and Afghans headed west between Route Ottawa and the Arghandab River. TF Grizzly moved to deal with rear area security around Comox. By 1600 hours, the forces cleared to Route Abbotsford. There was no contact.[130]

From 16 to 18 September, Regional Command (South) re-aligned its forces. A Company 2-4 Infantry had to return to its area of operations elsewhere. Two company areas of operations were established: B Company was responsible for the Victoria-Abbotsford box while A Company took the area from Abbotsford to Comox, with TF Grizzly continuing with its security tasks around Comox. B Company returned to KAF for refit and ISTAR took over, with A Company moving to B Company's area. The only significant incident involved a suicide vehicle-borne IED attack on Maj Abthorpe's vehicle on the way back to KAF. In effect, Phase 3 was complete.[131] Lt Gen Richards announced on 17 September that Operation MEDUSA was "successfully completed."[132]

Despite the Richards announcement, the most important part of Operation MEDUSA, the Phase 4 stabilization and governance phase, still had to play out. Neither Zharey nor Panjwayi districts were completely clear of insurgents. On the morning of 18 September, A Company was mounting its daily patrols when 2 Platoon and its accompanying combat engineers stopped to talk to two young girls. An elderly individual riding a bicycle then approached and detonated amongst the platoon. In the ensuing explosion, the suicide bomber killed Pte David Byers, Cpl Shane Keating, Cpl Keith Morley from 2 PPCLI and Cpl Glen Arnold, a medic from 2 Field Ambulance; 16 other Canadians were wounded, plus two Afghans.[133]

As the UH-60 and CH-47 helicopters arrived to take away the dead and wounded, the analysis began. A and B Companies, as well as Recce Platoon, had saturated the area with patrols, so it was a target-rich environment. This particular attack occurred on the morning of 18 September 2006, which was the day Parliament opened back home in Canada. Given the hour of the attack, it would have hit the evening news. This was too coincidental; suicide attacks had until then been confined to the populated areas around Kandahar City. Maj Wright noted that it "was not too sophisticated for the enemy to get a cell phone call request to generate mass casualties at a particular time."[134]

A Company and the ISTAR units were ordered into leaguers north of their patrol areas closer to Highway 1.[135] This in effect meant that the area from Route Comox to Victoria remained sporadically patrolled for some days. This likely facilitated enemy repositioning and bought them time to recover. There were other effects. One officer noted that "soldiers now worried about the population as a threat and escalations of force became a problem. The leadership had to really grip this."[136]

Meanwhile, LCol Hetherington and the PRT staff worked to coordinate post-battle effects mitigation with the provincial authorities. What was the plan to re-populate Zharey district? The Afghan members of the Disaster Management Committee, working with UN organs in Kandahar and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, determined that they would have teams to "go out and meet the villagers in their area and say 'Let's go to your property.' They'd go to the property and say 'We're going to make sure you get ten tons of bricks dropped here where you can rebuild your compound.' We could handle that with Commanders Contingency Fund money. Then the teams would have to identify where the families were going and get foodstuffs brought in. We would work through the existing Community Development Council and district development assemblies structure to understand where the priorities would be."[137] The Governor, Asadullah Khalid, accepted the plan and a subsequent shura with the district power brokers went well.

Then there were the police. Police were crucial if the government was going to hold Zharey district. A national plan to jumpstart police presence throughout Afghanistan was at this time in the offing and fell out of the Policy Action Group recommendations and the ADZ strategy.[138]

Called the Afghan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP), it was a stopgap measure for a planned two years until fully trained police from the DynCorp-run regional training centers were ready. Raised through district shuras in conjunction with the new regional police chiefs, the ANAP was a partially-trained militia that had slightly more allegiance to the national government than the existing Afghan National Police, who were mostly re-rolled AMF members. The PRT had been tracking auxiliary police development and it was promising, but the force development stalled when it became enmeshed in bureaucracy and politics.[139]

The Afghan National Army had portions of two kandaks in the MEDUSA fight. When MEDUSA wound down in late September, however, Afghan National Army had to pull out. One kandak from 209 Corps in the north had to return home as part of its rotation, leaving part of 2nd Kandak, 1st Brigade from 205 Corps covering Bazaar-e Panjwayi. This kandak did superb work protecting the town during MEDUSA and was instrumental in resettlement of the population there, but it too was tasked elsewhere and departed.[140]

There was money from the Canadian Army; and there was money from the U.S. Army. The Afghans had a plan in place to use it. Phase 4 was ready to go, except some things were missing. The population was not returning to Zharey district. Despite the fact that TF Grizzly reported returning population, these people were mostly returning back to Bazaar-e Panjwayi and not in sufficient numbers to Zharey district. As LCol Hetherington noted ruefully, "The people did want to go back, and the ones that came back were met by reconstruction engineers from the city, but the engineers would not go in, claiming it was too dangerous because they had been told by the [battle group] that the Taliban was still meeting in there." The ANAP who should have been there to escort these people and protect them did not show up either. LCol Lavoie reported that he did not have the forces to continue to clear and hold the area.[141] This set the stage for the next act in the MEDUSA drama.

Route SUMMIT

Regional Command (South) and TF 3-06 were confronted with a huge problem. What to do next? The enemy helped with this decision by re-infiltrating the battle area and IED'ing Route Comox and the other north-south routes between Highway 1 and Bazaar-e Panjwayi. There were no less than seven IED strikes against the battle group in the space of a week, plus several strikes against civilians. Several soldiers, American and Canadian, were wounded. According to Maj Gasparotto, "These incidents precipitated the order to build Route Summit." LCol Lavoie ordered the construction of a road that would connect Patrol Base Wilson on Highway 1 with a planned forward operating base that would be built on the Ma'Sum Ghar feature. Another forward operating base would be built on the other side of the Arghandab across from FOB Ma'Sum Ghar so that the crossing point would be protected; its site was right on the location of the destroyed Zettelmeyer earthmover

and became known as FOB Zettelmeyer.[142] The route was divided into sectors to facilitate control and construction. Several strong points were added to the plan later on: North, Centre and South, each capable of housing a platoon. The idea was that these facilities would transition later on into police stations or Afghan National Army patrol bases

Route Summit really started as an expedient, unpaved combat road, not the paved highway it is today. During the fighting, existing lanes had been widened by the engineers to get the vehicles through. LCol Lavoie wanted the ability to move back and forth with open fields of fire to avoid ambushes. The fact that this road would occupy exactly where Haji Agha Lalai Dastagiri (from the Disaster Management Committee, and a Provincial Development Committee member from Panjwayi district) had started his Bazaar-e Panjwayi connector route back in 2005 before being thwarted by local power brokers was not purely coincidental. He became an "interlocutor" on the project, according to LCol Hetherington. Dastagiri became a primary figure in the pay out of funds to the landowners who had their land expropriated for the project in Zharey district. He took his cut for brokering the deals, as such "lubrication" was the best and only way to get the job done quickly, and from a certain perspective, safely.[143] The economic benefits of having Route Summit in place were clearly attractive to the PRT and the Provincial Development Committee.

When word went back to ISAF HQ in Kabul about the future plans to build and then pave Route Summit in order to "IED proof" it, substantial pressure was brought to bear on Regional Command (South) to "allow" Germany to pay for it; Germany could say they were contributing to the war in the south without actually sending troops. Nobody expected that a battalion of German combat engineers would materialize and start paving, but weeks became months and no German resources arrived. The German CIDA equivalent, GTZ (Agency for Technical Co-operation), was supposed to come down from Regional Command (North) but it conducted no work on Summit.[144]

To build Route Summit, 23 Field Squadron used its rented/borrowed/liberated "Mad Maxed" bulldozers. The squadron was also assigned two LAV III infantry platoons, while ISTAR Squadron with its Coyotes and Recce Platoon maintained over-watch. Construction kicked off on 29 September 2006 and involved grape hut demolition, the removal of vineyard trenches, and the widening of the combat road and its verges to 100 metres. The idea was to position three strong points along the 6.5-kilometre route and to have lines of sight from one position to the next, from Patrol Base Wilson all the way to FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, so that the enemy would be deterred from either moving across the Summit line or laying IEDs. However, when the operation started, Pte Klukie from 1 RCR triggered a large IED, which killed him.[145] PO2 James Leith was luckier: after his vehicle hit an IED in Pashmul, he found a secondary device that was unstable.

The EOD equipment was destroyed in the initial blast. This forced Leith to use his bayonet to dismantle the second device, which he did successfully. PO2 Leith was awarded the Star of Courage for his actions.

Effects Mitigation: Provincial Reconstruction Team Operations

With all of the fighting going on, it is easy to overlook PRT operations. For most of fall, LCol Hetherington was focused on effects mitigation in the wake of operations:

> My CIMIC teams were like reconstruction FOO parties (I'm a Gunner). I'd create a PRT Detachment, cut them to the companies where they would travel under their security and work with that company commander as a deliverer of non-kinetic effects, whether it's through liaison or small projects, but they would always have that reach-back capability to the KPRT so that if they said 'Hey, you, know, maybe we need CIDA to look at something bigger here, or maybe we need a link to an NGO…. During BAAZ TSUKA we deployed a CIMIC Coordination Centre to the battle group headquarters.[146]

However, three CIDA personnel arrived to replace Michael Callan in August 2006. Gavin Buchan from DFAIT also joined the team. Despite the severely reduced amount of NGO and UN activity in the province, LCol Hetherington still was responsible for helping the Afghans coordinate activities, so he established a Project Targeting Board to assess and prioritize each project and assign it to the right end-user. The PRT was, however, hampered bureaucratically in two ways. First, the CIDA representative essentially conducted a protracted academic debate over how worthwhile each project was, while the military personnel wanted tangible and visible effects immediately. Second, CIDA-controlled spending authority remained, as it had in Kabul three years previously, highly centralized, bureaucratic, and thus glacially slow.

Then there was the UN. The PRT naturally gravitated to the UNAMA and sought its input on how to handle the post-MEDUSA environment to rebuild Zharey and get the population back in. This meant demining, shelter reconstruction, transport back to Zharey and provision of food. In theory, the World Food Program, the UN deminers, and UN HABITAT should have been able to handle these requirements. In Kandahar, the UNAMA office's response was incredibly bureaucratic: it essentially refused to deal with the PRT and insisted that the request come from the Afghan government. LCol Hetherington wanted to empower the Disaster Management Committee (led by Dastagiri), and get Afghans working with the Canadian PRT and UNAMA together. Ultimately, the World Food Program was the only organization that was willing to contribute anything meaningful.[147]

LCol Hetherington bypassed those barriers with Commanders Contingency Fund monies and gave his CIMIC detachments what he called "cases o' cash." CIMIC operators like WO Dean Henley and Sgt Nicky Bascon and others working in Zharey and Panjwayi were able to get the schools at Sperwan and Bazaar-e Panjwayi re-opened by working with local power brokers like Dastagiri.

LCol Hetherington and the PRT also played an important role in maintaining contact, socially as well as developmentally, with key power brokers. This was not easy when all of the attention was focused west of the city, but if these and other connections had been neglected, operations conducted in 2007 and later would have become even more problematic. LCol Hetherington was also the main point of contact with the Governor, Asadullah Khalid. He kept pushing Khalid to make the Provincial Development Committee something more than nascent, but there was "no prioritization, no coordination…the framework of a bureaucracy just did not exist in the governor's office at that time."[148] There was no provincial SAT-A-like organization mentoring in Kandahar.

That had to wait, however, as there were more urgent problems developing in Zharey and Panjwayi districts. The implementation of humanitarian and reconstruction efforts slowly unmasked the reality of power rivalries in those districts. This afforded a view into what was happening in the province beneath the surface of day-to-day commerce and discourse, and provided insight into what fuelled the insurgency at the local level.

Member of Parliament and the leader of Senjaray, Habibullah Jan, perceived the Dastagiri-led Disaster Management Committee as not distributing aid equitably in his area. The Governor, Asadullah Khalid, told the PRT that Habibullah Jan provided logistical support to the Taliban. When the PRT met with Jan, he told them that police on Highway 1, led by a Col Akka who was appointed by Asadullah Khalid, were harassing people and extorting money from them. Jan claimed that Khairuddin, the district leader for Zharey, was Ahmad Wali Karzai's cousin and that the Governor had appointed him as well. Furthermore, Khairuddin rented out the tractors donated by the non-governmental organizations instead of passing them on to those who needed them.[149]

The upshot, as the PRT learned from local people, was that:

> contributing factors to the worsening security situation are the interference of the foreigners, poor governance, and broken promises…the recent bombardment during Operation MEDUSA was cowardly, ruthless, and discriminatory towards civilian targets [there was criticism] of the Governor of Kandahar for not assisting the civilians…there was a failure of the NSP, poppy eradication, and high unemployment rates….the government does not build any madrassas inside the province and youth end up in Pakistani madrassas getting brainwashed.[150]

The PRT concluded that:

> Engagements with locals are a blunt testimony to the widespread corruption in all levels: administrative, judicial, and executive, of the provincial government. The aim of ISAF and the KPRT is to support institutions and not individuals eg: supporting the governance and not the Governor of Kandahar. However, if these institutions are run by the people who are known for incompetency, corruption, mischief, and abusing the public trust then the population will see us as part of the problem and not the solution.[151]

Transitioning from MEDUSA: Robust "Capability Enhancement."

Over the course of 2006, BGen Fraser was less and less enthralled with the accuracy of close air support. There had been near misses during TF Orion's time that did not sit comfortably with the Canadian leadership. At the end of August 2006, Fraser and his staff spoke with LGen Gauthier about the need for additional capabilities. Three days before the deadly A-10 strike on 4 September, Commander CEFCOM's visit report took note of a long list of items, sub-units and enablers. What BGen Fraser was looking for, however, were tanks. He wanted an accurate, direct fire capability that could be used immediately, not when someone else's aircraft happened to be available and the rules of engagement planets were in alignment.[152] (The Israelis, for example, placed an overreliance on airpower as "flying artillery" to the detriment of the combined arms team in 1956 and 1967, and paid the price in blood during the 1973 war).

Gauthier's post-visit report in early September obliquely referred to the fact that "Requirements have since grown to include the identified need for armour and to adjust the TO&E [Table of Organization and Equipment] to provide more depth in armoured fighting vehicles."[153] Fraser and staff wanted another infantry company, counter-mortar capability, better counter IED and armoured engineers. They wanted improvements to the PRT, specifically some form of protected CIMIC that, unlike the OGDs, was willing and could go into dangerous areas. This was deemed as crucial as the PRT was limited in where and what it could do – and there was more.

Of course, that "more" would cost money and Ottawa, as usual, did not want to spend money. Ottawa had thus far fought the war on the cheap and feebly continued to portray operations in Afghanistan as 'not war.' There were concerns in Ottawa that deploying vehicles like tanks would finally 'confirm' to the vocal critics that Canada was actually at war. Moreover, there were the usual armchair experts who would publicly question the value of tanks in a 'counterinsurgency' environment. There were other blockages, including the ponderous Canadian government acquisition process and staff in Ottawa who had a vested interest in replacing the Leopards with a dangerously vulnerable gun-over armour

Photo Credit: DND AS2006-0954a

BGen David Fraser requested the deployment of Canadian Leopard tanks after a platoon from 1 RCR was shot up and put out of action by a U.S. Air Force A-10 attack aircraft on the second day of Operation MEDUSA.

system called Stryker.[154] The Chief of the Land Staff, LGen Andrew Leslie, decided to cut through the nonsense, called LCol Lavoie and asked him: "Can you use tanks?" Lavoie relied, "Fuck, yes, I can use tanks!"[155] That settled the matter.

The priority enhancements became a Leopard C-2 tank squadron, a mechanized infantry company in LAV III, two more M-777 guns, another recce troop with Coyotes and an armoured engineer squadron with Badger armoured engineer vehicles (AEVs). In addition, there would be a HALO counter-mortar detection system, a replacement engineer field troop, and individual augmentation for Health Services, Intelligence and the National Support Element. The need for a route clearance package was noted but it would have to be acquired – all of the other capabilities were on hand in Canada. Units and formations back in Canada dropped everything to make this happen, but it was unlikely that these reinforcements would get to theatre before October.[156]

Gauthier's report also looked at needed changes to the command and control structure. These changes would be implemented when Canada handed off control of Regional Command (South) in November and would be examined later on.

October 2006: The Summit Strong Point Engagements

The TF 3-06 command staff took stock and concluded that Operation MEDUSA Phase 3 really "did not occur" and that Phase 4 "was announced" but not really acted upon. They characterized the shift in the form of enemy activity to "ambushes and guerrilla attacks to disrupt security." For all intents and purposes, this was a whole new operation, even though it was not assigned a code name. LCol Lavoie wanted to "expand the security bubble around Summit."[157] (See Figure 11-10)

The enemy, however, were more than prepared to try and prick the bubble. 23 Field Squadron believed that the enemy were deliberately targeting its three bulldozers, knowing full well that without the machines, the road could not be built. It was not unusual to see four LAV IIIs and a platoon of infantry protecting a single bulldozer. On several occasions, the enemy directed RPG fire at them, fortunately to no effect.[158]

ISTAR Squadron and 23 Field Squadron were at work on Summit and, for protective purposes, established a leaguer south of Pasab near the former Objective TEMPLAR. ISTAR Squadron also had an observation post to the north containing two Coyotes and a Mobile Electronic Warfare Team. They could oversee work on Sectors 2 and 3 from this position. Usually this leaguer held several Coyotes but on the night of 3 October 2006, the road-building equipment and an American Route Clearance Package were also present.[159]

The electronic warfare team detected enemy preparations minutes before three enemy assault groups, from both west and east, attacked the observation post and the leaguer. A volley of RPG, fired from compounds 70 metres to the east, struck both positions. Two Dragoons, Sgt Craig Gillam and Cpl Robert Mitchell, were killed and five other Canadians wounded. An American Hummer carrying explosives took a hit to its trailer, wounding three American sappers. Maj Lussier had the LAVs pour 25mm fire on the enemy positions while Maj Gasparotto escorted the two other American Hummers loaded with wounded up to Patrol Base Wilson. The Husky vehicle from the route clearance package was immobilized, as was one Coyote. The enemy withdrew and took their casualties with them.[160] This attack forced work on Sector 2 to stop. As a result Strong Point North's construction was accelerated so that a presence could be maintained in that area. The observation coverage on Sector 2 was attenuated, however, and this gave the enemy an opportunity to lay IEDs. One blew up an RG-31, killing Trooper Mark Wilson from the RCD. In a later incident Maj Gasparotto's LAV III was also subjected to a disabling IED strike.[161]

The critical need for the strong points to control Summit drove their expedient completion in early October. Strong Point North ("The Ghetto") and Strong Point Centre ("Castle Greyskull") went in first. After a few small-arms fire incidents demonstrated the need for more defensive depth, Strong Point West ("The Hacienda") was also constructed.

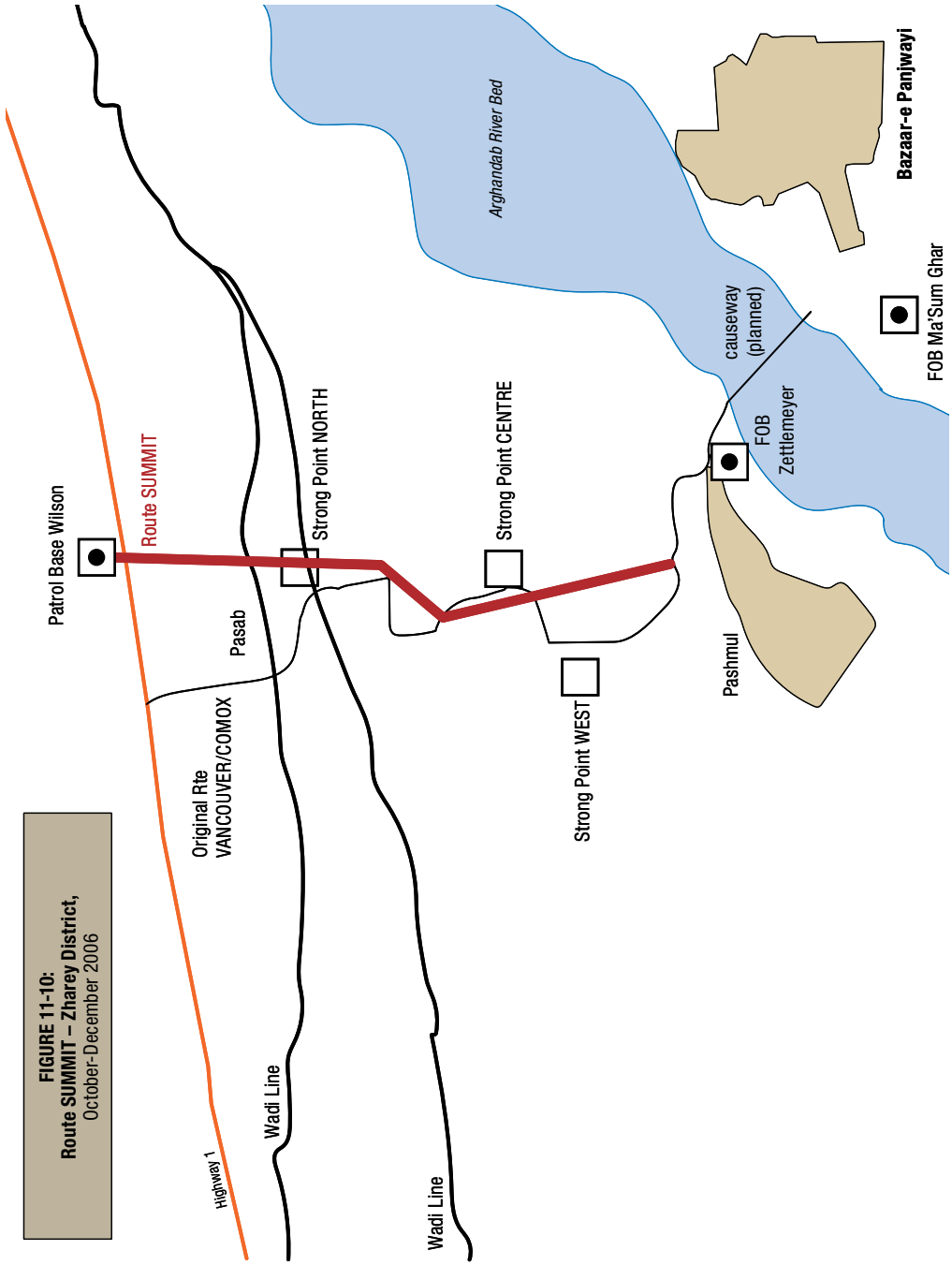


Figure 11-10: Route SUMMIT – Zharey District, October-December 2006

These strong points were designed to house a platoon and its vehicles. Each had a mortar pit, an elevated observation position, and run-ups so the LAV IIIs could use their 25mm cannon. TF 3-06 worked out a rotation plan so that one company-sized group could man the strong points, while maintaining another company up in FOB Martello. The remnants of Charles Company were the first to occupy the strong points in mid-October, replacing the ISTAR Squadron and 23 Field Squadron troops.

For the first two weeks of October, the enemy employed what was estimated to be a platoon-sized fighting group against the Summit construction project. The enemy sections would initiate a contact right before sunset and use the darkness to exfiltrate. Strong Point West attracted a significant amount of small-arms fire because of its location.[162]

On the night of 14 October, however, the enemy mounted their most sophisticated attack yet with four simultaneous ambushes. An engineer LAV III was engaged from the west with an 82mm recoilless rifle near the junction of Summit and Comox; they returned fire and a Dutch AH-64 came in to assist. A LAV III from Charles Company moved to join them when they were engaged, this time from the east. LCol Lavoie's tactical headquarters was moving down Summit and it was engaged as well.

Photo Credit: Author

This is the remains of 1 RCR's Strong Point Centre, which endured fierce fighting in fall 2006. Strong Point Centre was one of several positions established to protect Route Summit, which linked Highway 1 with Bazaar-e Panjwayi.

9 Platoon, occupying Strong Point Centre, took multiple mortar, RPG, and 82mm recoilless rounds from enemy positions to the west. One vehicle was hit, killing Sgt Darcy Tedford and Pte Blake Williamson, wounding two more. During the course of the action, MCpl Jeremy Leblanc took over his section from Tedford, attended to the wounded, and rallied the section to return fire and hold their position. 9 Platoon called in E Battery to suppress the fire, which was coming from grape trenches and compounds. Enemy small-arms fire continued, despite the bombardment, against all of the engaged Canadian callsigns for nearly an hour. A Bison ambulance on its way to recover the wounded then broke down on Summit, which forced a LAV III from 1 RCR's TAC and another from 9 Platoon to evacuate the wounded to Patrol Base Wilson. The two LAV IIIs escorted a HLVW wrecker back to the Bison – and then it broke down. The Bison was towed to Strong Point Centre. The enemy then attacked FOB Zettelmeyer from the west with small-arms fire. After more artillery was dropped on them, the enemy forces withdrew to the west.[163] MCpl Leblanc was awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.

Photo Credit: Courtesy LCol Geoff Abthorpe

Strong Point West near Pashmul was assaulted by two waves of insurgents on the night of 29 December 2006. Running low on ammunition, B Company was reinforced by the Leopard tank squadron and beat back the enemy.

In any other conflict, past and present, defensive positions like these would have had the full array of stores to ensure that the enemy kept their distance, which in turn would reduce their accuracy, or deter them altogether. Canadian policy, however, prevented the soldiers of TF 3-06 from making use of all possible means. As one engineer reported, "The platoons were doing their best. The ground was extremely difficult to cover and the Taliban operating in the area were highly skilled at infiltration. I have no doubt that anti-personnel mines covering the approaches to Route Summit would have stopped some of these attacks."[164] Those disarmament proponents, especially those in DFAIT who supported the Ottawa Treaty with such messianic fervor, in effect denuded Canadian soldiers of the traditional tools when they needed them. It was, according to some observers, yet another example of how the 'peacekeeping' era had detrimental effects on Canadian Army operations.

Progress on Route Summit stalled and "was in jeopardy of failure." That said, a small number of people were starting to return to their compounds in Sector 1, the closest to Patrol Base Wilson and Strong Point North. The lack of protected bulldozers and engineer equipment was a significant problem. Local contractors, especially ones providing gravel for the road, used unprotected civilian vehicles and were increasingly reluctant to participate. In addition, there were contracting issues, something which the PRT became increasingly involved in. Ultimately, Route Summit issues were elevated up to ISAF HQ and after some deliberation, there was agreement: Canada would fund Sector 6, USAID would fund Sector 5 (which was where the bridge across the Arghandab would go); and Germany would fund Sectors 1 through 4. Canadian money was readily available but according to an officer involved, "The Germans eventually released their funds but the delay cost the battle group an extra two months guarding the road. USAID never did fund the bridge."[165]

On 21 October 2006, 23rd Field Squadron finally got its four Badger AEVs so they could continue to work in the semi-permissive environment – just in time for the fall rains. Unprecedented rainfall, after years and years of drought, turned Route Summit into Lake Summit. An expedient causeway across the Arghandab River made of concrete culverts was washed away, while the change in the irrigation system because of the road construction flooded out Sector 2. As Maj Gasparotto noted, "Had it not been for the Badgers we would have lost Summit." The AEVs were kept busy shoring up the strong points with their dozer blades and hydraulic scoops. By 23 November, the engineers' estimated completion date would be 11 January 2007.[166] In fact, paving would not be completed until March 2007 and the bridge would not be finished until fall of that year.

FOB Martello Redux: October 2006

TF 3-06 could not, however, ignore its other tasks. Consequently B Company and attachments was sent back up to FOB Martello to resume operations in Shah Wali Kot. With all of the focus on Route Summit, however, B Company went into what Maj Abthorpe called "a sixty-day information void." Nobody knew what was going on in the district. The intelligence world was "sympathetic, but [they] said they only had so much horsepower and was all being focused on Panjwayi." The Dutch, who had taken over Martello during MEDUSA, had been hit several times and had not patrolled out of the forward operating base. Left to their own devices, Maj Abthorpe and his men reverted back to the counterinsurgency operations they trained for and rebuilt their knowledge base through aggressive patrolling and local contact. A CIMIC team from the PRT arrived and started local projects, including generator repair. Outreach to the local 'police' resulted in joint random vehicle checkpoints on the Tarinkot road. With limited resources, however (there were only two platoons, and one was attached to the PRT until the reinforcing force protection company arrived in December), B Company was only able to extend its influence to the community of El Bak instead of into the surrounding valleys or into Mianishin district.

There was, however, still an insurgent presence in Shah Wali Kot: rockets and mortars rained down on the forward operating base daily. With the lack of intelligence access and capability, B Company developed local sources as best they could. Lacking electronic warfare or signal intelligence equipment, they disassembled humanitarian handout radios, borrowed and modified some antennas, and built improvised SIGINT collectors that reached out about 25 kilometres; using this system, B Company was able to map enemy activity in the area.[167]

Employing its sources, B Company identified several categories of enemy, which numbered about 150 personnel. The first group consisted of locals who were being harassed by the 'police', organized, and and took up arms against them as part of a Pashtunwali blood feud. Then there were agitators from elsewhere in Kandahar who showed up from time to time to egg them on. The more seasoned fighters from further south sometimes came up north to 'relax' and worked with the locals or operated on their own. Enemy activity in the district was coordinated with actions further south. When the insurgent commanders in Zharey and Panjwayi needed the pressure taken off, "they would send up a couple of dudes, organize a motley crew, hit us, and bugger off back down [south]."[168]

Attacks against Martello usually involved a mortar, which had a fire controller and a crew. After several days of sporadic bombardment, B Company patrols finally apprehended a mortar fire controller on a ridge. After tactical questioning, the Canadians learned that "he had been trained in the Pakistan Army and left [them] to join the fight across the border."[169] The local elders arrived pleading for his return, frightened of possible retribution by the Taliban. He was sent south to KAF.

In time, a deal was cut between TF 3-06, Regional Command (South) and TF-31. ODA 336 arrived at FOB Martello with orders to cooperate with B Company. B Company got its third platoon back from the PRT. This allowed for greater operational tempo in the district.

ODA 336 with its intelligence resources compared their enemy trace with B Company's – and it was identical. The ODA intelligence sergeant confirmed that there was a training camp in an adjacent valley with about 50 enemy insurgents in it, in addition to the estimated 150 other fighters in the area. A plan was drawn up to raid the camp and exploit it. Under the new rules of engagement established by the incoming Dutch commander of Regional Command (South), the coalition forces at FOB Martello could not just rain speculative fire onto the training camp. The ODA commander declared a Troops in Contact or TIC event just as he and his forces were departing Martello to do the raid. While the raid was in progress, the coalition forces contributed a Village Medical Outreach in the communities adjacent to the forward operating base.

The ODA came back from the training camp raid with information that confirmed connections between the police in Khakrez district and the insurgent forces in Shah Wali Kot. No connection was found between those police and the local 'police,' who were seen as competitors. It appeared as though the Taliban-sympathetic police in Khakrez and the Taliban in Shah Wali Kot were aligned in common cause against the Shah Wali Kot 'police.' Before anything could really be done about the situation, B Company was ordered to turn over FOB Martello to a private security firm. B Company and ODA 336 headed south at the end of November.

The new incoming Regional Command (South) made the decision to withdraw Canadian troops from Shah Wali Kot at this point. This district lay outside the ADZ and was no longer a priority. The Confidence in Government plan, dormant since summer 2006, was now abandoned. It is accurate to assert that FOB Martello served its purpose in 2006 by facilitating the Dutch deployment to Oruzgan but the decision to jettison the stabilization and reconstruction work conducted by the PRT, TF Gun Devils and TF Orion remains questionable. Enemy influence in Shah Wali Kot grew and had detrimental effects on later TF Kandahar operations in 2007 and 2008.

Panjwayi District: September-October 2006

Coalition dispositions in western Panjwayi district included a kandak headquarters plus an Afghan infantry company and its associated U.S. Special Forces ODA. The objective was to transition control of Sperwan Ghar to TF Grizzly. A Company from 2-4 Infantry, a pair of ODAs, an Afghan kandak and an additional Afghan infantry company were operating in what was now called Area of Operation Grizzly. These forces were withdrawn on 21 September.[170] (See Figure 11-11)

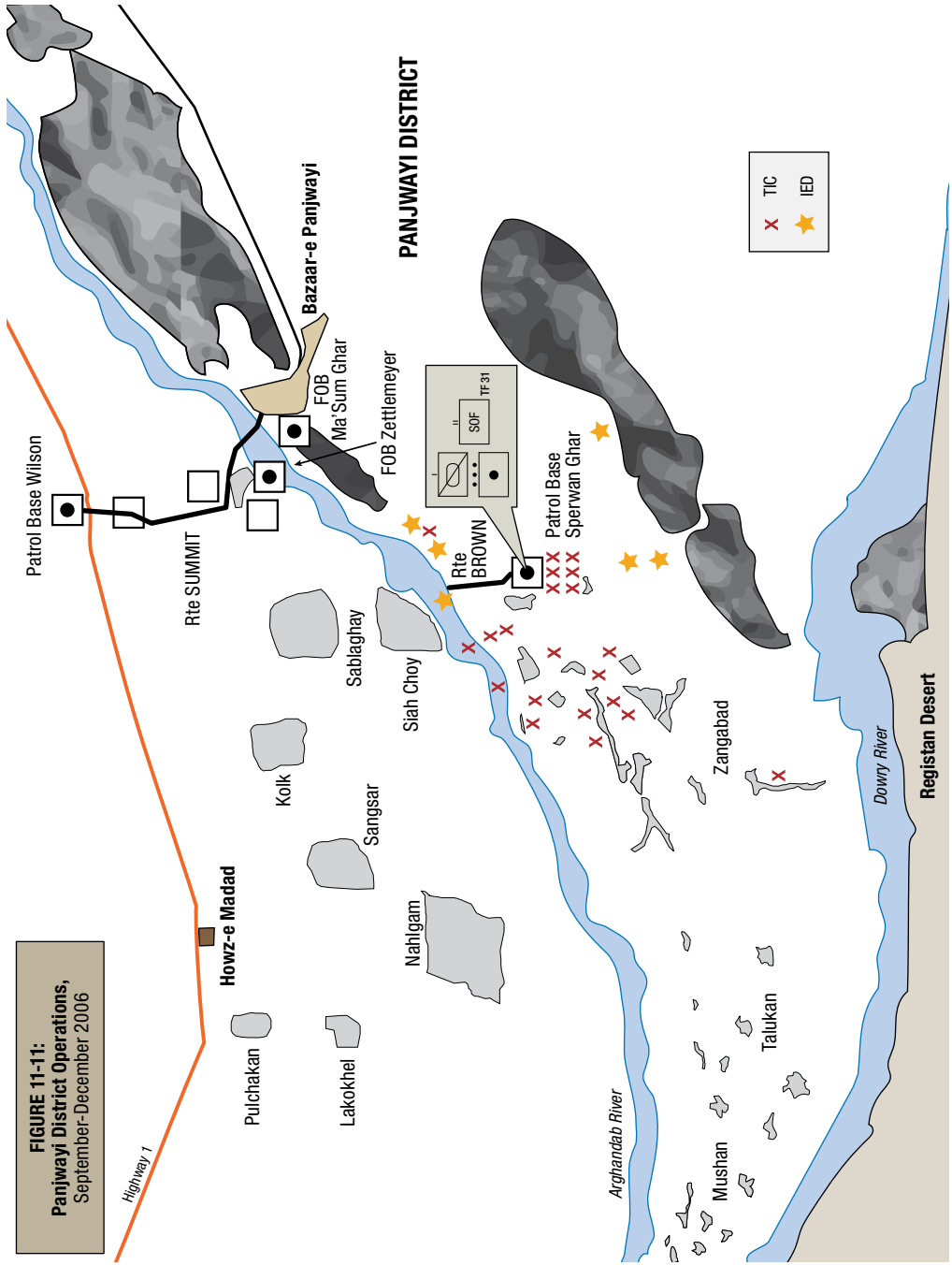


Figure 11-11: Panjwayi District Operations, September-December 2006

TF 31 returned to the area and conducted operations against any and all targets in the immediate vicinity. Sperwan Ghar now endured daily mortar strikes.[171] In due course, E Battery deployed two of its M-777 guns and 81mm mortars to what was now called Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar, which was later bolstered by Canadian snipers, a Canadian joint terminal attack controller, an Afghan infantry company and three U.S. Special Forces ODAs (which rotated). The Afghan company was an aggressive and confident organization trained by U.S. Rangers. A Royal Marines ETT later joined them with another Afghan company.[172] Maj Lussier's ISTAR Squadron then moved to Sperwan Ghar after Charles Company rotated onto the Summit line in October.

A combat engineer detachment from 23 Field Squadron arrived with a civilian backhoe and started to dig in those forces. HESCO bastion arrived to further fortify the positions as the insurgents employed mortars and airburst RPGs on a daily basis. The American ODA with the Afghan company alternately mounted foot patrols to the west or vehicle patrols to the north in order to generate contacts. The issue here was that the Canadians were ISAF, and the Americans were Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. There was no deliberate operational plan as per ISAF operating instructions but the Canadians responded to extract the Americans when necessary.[173]

Eventually, the Coyote sensors were used to cue the special forces and their Afghans. On one occasion, a special forces patrol probed into Zangabad market. Insurgents poured out of nowhere and the fight was on. Close air support, aviation and artillery were brought to bear with the assistance of the Coyote crews based in Sperwan Ghar. This action lasted nine hours: the Dragoons watched the enemy on their monitors run from building to building trying to escape the JDAMS and Guided Bomb Units delivered by aircraft from the carrier USS Eisenhower. The Afghan troops, using their Icoms, could hear the enemy "wailing and crying" on the means because of the large number of casualties, so they taunted them over the radios for psychological effect. In the middle of the fight, a previously unknown American callsign called Maj Lussier on the Canadian squadron net:

"How y'all doing?"
"Killing Taliban. Who are you?"
"[designation]"
"You bringing anything to the fight?"
"Just keep up the good work!"

It appeared this was a system operator from the 'Other Government Agency' observing the fight from on high and wanted to pay his compliments. Special forces patrols later discovered four casualty collection points with enemy dead and piles of body parts.

In the end, 85 enemy fighters were confirmed killed as well as four of their commanders. None of them were from Afghanistan.[174]

For the most part, the enemy stayed out of the area east of Sperwan Ghar and seemed to be based in Zangabad, which, it turned out, was more of an insurgent hotspot than had previously been understood. There were numerous contacts to the west of the patrol base. Canadian engineers were brought in to improve the track that ran from Sperwan Ghar to the rutted east-west dirt road that was now designated Route Fosters, which ran west to Mushan and east to Bazaar-e Panjwayi and then to Kandahar. Contractors dumped gravel but then were harassed with IEDs. When U.S. Special Forces Sergeant 1st Class William Brown was killed in an IED attack, the road from Sperwan Ghar to Fosters was designated Route Brown. Badger AEVs, covered by Leopard tanks, came in to plow a road and destroy buildings on either side of it.[175]

With the vegetation dying in fall, there was better observation-and thus more opportunities to bring fires down on insurgent movements when they were observed from Coyote vehicles using their mast-mounted sensors. Wadis that had been covered with trees were now 'zipped open' and were exposed as logistics transit routes. ISTAR Squadron even observed an enemy relief in place, with the insurgents maintaining complete radio silence throughout. The insurgents operating in western Panjwayi wore mixed dress, and some wore Afghan National Army battle dress uniform pants with T-shirts and chest rigs. All looked fit. These were not local farmers. Some of the insurgents were even tall Caucasians. They employed fire control and were tactically oriented, with no 'spray and pray' behaviour.[176]

The coalition forces at Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar had an almost uncountable number of TICs throughout October and into November. The environment was so target rich that departing special forces patrols would call in a TIC report on leaving the base so that the close support was on station by the time the shooting actually started. Coyotes and LAV IIIs from ISTAR Squadron responded to support these patrols on a daily basis. In one three-day period, the Squadron went through 145 boxes of 25mm ammunition.[177]

On the night of 24 October 2006, a Coyote crew spotted enemy movement around a compound complex and called in 81mm mortars from E Battery. A U.S. joint terminal attack controller then brought a B-1B bomber on station, which proceeded to unload four 2 000-pound bombs. Then an AC-130 gunship arrived and took out fleeing enemy personnel.[178] At the time, this was not considered an overly significant TIC event. However, when the Canadians transitioned out of Regional Command (South) HQ and the Dutch took over, furious elders from Panjwayi emerged and complained that 60 civilians had been killed. This was the first complaint about alleged civilian casualties during the course of TF 3-06's operations. The complaint went all the way to Kabul and dragged in the Karzai Government and ISAF HQ, which in turn resulted in an investigation. TF 3-06 was finally

cleared of any wrongdoing and there was no evidence of any civilian deaths, let alone 60, but the perception that Canadians were applying too much firepower was enhanced both in Kabul and in Kandahar circles, and particularly with incoming Regional Command (South) commander, Maj Gen Ton Van Loon.

A New Attitude: Changes of Command, November 2006

Maj Gen Ton Van Loon and his staff replaced BGen Fraser and CTF Aegis on 1 November 2006. As the 'new broom,' Van Loon believed that Operation MEDUSA had used too much firepower. As a result, he established tighter control of fires and added more detailed rules of engagement. His view was influenced by what many called the "Dutch Method,"[179] which is best encapsulated by Col Hans van Griensven's remarks to *The New York Times* that "We're not here to fight the Taliban. We're here to make the Taliban irrelevant."[180] Influenced by the Srebrenica massacre in 1995 and by their operations in Iraq, some of the Dutch commanders interviewed believed that "civilian deaths and property damage…have hardened villager's attitudes, which helps the insurgents with recruiting, intelligence, and protection."[181] They wanted to place more emphasis on understanding local culture and not offending Afghans, with the belief that this would provide an *entrée* into hearts and minds so the population would support the government.

So what was the "Dutch Method" in practice? It seemed, to many seasoned practitioners from other countries, to consist of "development" before "security." In Oruzgan province, Dutch forces with incredibly restrictive rules of engagement withdrew when the enemy were present on a regular basis, to the disgust of many Afghan interpreters who thought that was sending the wrong message. The operational focus was on Oruzgan PRT's activities to curry favour with the Afghan power structure, take pictures of Dutch troops wearing berets instead of helmets while riding bicycles, and 'make nice' with the population of Tarinkot, leaving Australian and American SOF to do the dirty work and killing behind the scenes up in the hills. Because those units operated outside the gaze of public scrutiny, their effects were not part of the public equation so it looked to many, particularly those in the Dutch media and Dutch government, like the 'Dutch Method' was working. They wanted quick, visible results.[182] Van Loon now wanted to apply the 'Dutch Method' to TF Kandahar as well as Regional Command (South). The showcase for this 'new' approach would be an operation called BAAZ TSUKA. Associated planning, dubbed Operation SATYR DEUCALION, sought to harness key leader engagements with non-kinetic effects planning.

In more general terms, Van Loon's planning guidance for Regional Command (South) focused on consolidating the Canadian battle group in Zharey and Panjwayi. Canadians in FOB Martello and Spin Boldak were to move out as soon as possible. TF 3-06 was to shift and support the delivery of security "in and around Kandahar City" in accordance with

another operation, SATYR PYRRHA. Route Summit was to be completed as soon as feasible. And a search was to be made for means to improve the Afghan's security capacity, mostly the police.[183]

The results of LGen Gauthier's command and control discussions with Canadian and ISAF commanders back in September were implemented as policy as Regional Command (South) changed hands. There were several issues in play. First, Regional Command (South) was going to shift from a brigade-sized headquarters to a division-sized headquarters. Second, the main Canadian contributions to ISAF, the battle group, the PRT and the incoming Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT), each needed to be synchronized with NATO ISAF planning. Canada, in his view, needed to get credit for her commitment in NATO circles so it could be leveraged strategically. Commander ISAF Lt Gen Richards agreed with Gauthier and suggested that Canada establish TF Kandahar, led by a brigadier-general, responsible for operations in the province to Regional Command (South) and to the Canadian chain of command.[184]

At the same time, there was an increased need to have a Canadian headquarters that could handle PRT and battle group operations as Regional Command (South) shifted to a higher level planning focus. Concurrent with that was the critical need to have a buffer between the tactical forces and the Canadian entities in Ottawa to avoid micromanagement.[185]

Previously, BGen Fraser was 'double hatted' as the commander of Canadian forces in Afghanistan and as the coalition Commander, CTF AEGIS/RC (South). Now, under the new structure, everything in Kandahar province reporting to NATO ISAF would now be commanded by the coalition Commander Task Force Kandahar (TFK) who was also the Canadian Commander Joint Task Force Afghanistan (JTF-A), commanding all Canadians in Afghanistan including those remaining in Kabul. Command of RC (South) would now rotate between the Dutch, British, and Canadians on nine-month cycles.

This forced last minute and far-reaching changes. The incoming National Command Element now had to be heavily augmented and then transformed into a brigade headquarters – and someone had to be found to command it. There was little or no time to train this new organization up. The new TF Kandahar/JTF Afghanistan was a conglomeration of reserve augmentees from Land Forces Atlantic Area and the incoming NCE troops, stiffened with experienced operators from Operation APOLLO in key departments. This included people like Maj Alex Watson, who was now responsible for information operations, or LCol Tom Bradley, who determined that there was no operations centre and created the Provincial Operations Centre. BGen Tim Grant was thrown in to lead the organization out of the wilderness and into the promised land of rational command and control.[186]

The expanded Canadian headquarters provided critical enablers in four key areas. First, a Fires Cell was incorporated into the structure to coordinate air support, artillery support and rules of engagement authorizations. CTF Aegis's Joint Operations Centre had one for the entire southern provincial area. By giving the Provincial Operations Centre this capability, it permitted the Canadian headquarters quicker access to other nations' air support and the ability to deconflict resources to avoid incidents like the Tarnak Farms tragedy. The second was the creation of a targeting meeting for non-lethal effects like information operations, CIMIC and reconstruction aid. This permitted the headquarters to acquire reconstruction monies and other forms of support to prepare for an operation far in advance rather than at the last minute. This change permitted those effects to be fed into the planning cycle at an earlier stage. Additionally, the Provincial Operations Centre received TUAV and Predator video feeds so the staff could see more or less immediately what was going on. Their predecessors back in the CTF Aegis rotation had to go into a specially compartmentalized back room in the CTF Aegis's Joint Operations Centre or communicate over the telephone to the TF Orion Tactical Operations Centre which was in contact with the American Predator controllers.[187]

Finally, the Provincial Operations Centre revitalized the Joint Provincial Coordination Centre (JPCC). TF 3-06 did not accord the JPCC the same level of importance that TF Orion and CTF Aegis did. Grant's new headquarters immediately understood that the JPCC was not only a valuable information collector, it was also an influence tool with the Afghan police and the Governor's Palace. The immediacy of the information, especially information on police operations in the districts and the city, constituted crucial situational awareness. It became, in LCol Bradley's words, "a critical enabler" and was treated as such by the new JTF-A headquarters. Connected to this was the Weekly Security Meeting. This had existed in another form during the CTF Aegis days but, like the JPCC, it was revitalized, drawing in the Afghan security forces leadership more and more in late 2006 and into early 2007. The Weekly Security Meeting increased the probability of gaining more and better information and it also served as a venue for antagonistic organizations to meet and resolve differences under BGen Grant's subtle guidance.[188]

Meanwhile, Maj Trevor Cadieu's Leopards arrived at KAF throughout October on board U.S. Air Force C-17s. B Squadron, however, was not immediately launched into the fight. When Maj Gen Van Loon took over and discovered the Canadians were bringing in tanks, he was appalled and informed TF Kandahar that he did not want tanks in a 'counterinsurgency' environment. There were concerns among the members of the new Regional Command (South) headquarters about the possibility of civilian casualties in Kandahar City if the tanks drove through the city on their way to Zharey and Panjwayi.

The new TF Kandahar commander, not *au fait* with the politics and just on the ground, would not deal with Van Loon and pulled the TF 3-06 DCO out of a meeting on the issue. Not a track turned. When LCol Lavoie returned from leave, he went and spoke with Van Loon directly. There had already been high-level intervention by this point, so a deal was made between TF Kandahar and Regional Command (South) that the tanks would not drive through the city, that they would take a bypass route west of KAF approved by Regional Command (South). After nearly three weeks of debate, on 22 November, Cadieu led B Squadron out the gate of KAF – and right into an unmarked minefield where his vehicle lost a track in a mine explosion. Plow tanks cleared lanes with the engineers and 12 hours later B Squadron was on its way, after uncovering 50 anti-tank and anti-personnel mines around them.[189]

JTF-A/TF Kandahar felt its way toward rationality throughout November 2006. A senior staff member recognized that JTF-A "developed due to a requirement to more closely monitor and influence tactical operations" conducted by Canadian elements (read: the battle group) on behalf of Commander CEFCOM as much as any other reason. But in fact, JTF-A was "neither manned nor equipped" properly to handle that and the myriad of other tasks that seemingly popped out of nowhere.[190] The Provincial Operations Centre formally stood up on 15 December, but it was believed that JTF-A HQ would not assume its full operational capacity until the end of February 2007.

Enter the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team

The virtual absence of the Afghan National Army from the fighting in Kandahar throughout 2006 was troublesome. Yes, part of a kandak from 209 Corps in the north was able to operate at the platoon level in company strength, but it was clearly not enough for the task at hand given the ADZ strategy. The internal coalition competition for Afghan kandaks was fierce and this was magnified by the fact that the U.S. Special Forces had two distinct advantages. First, they had working relationships with Afghans going back to 2001. Second, the U.S. Special Forces were part of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, not ISAF. In Canada's favour, there was substantial representation at the Kabul Military Training Centre and there were other influence tools in Kabul. However, could they be brought together and leveraged to get more Afghans down south to fight? That was unclear in late 2006, but efforts were made by LGen Leslie, who was by now the Chief of Land Staff, to use his previously developed influence with the Afghan leadership while LGen Gauthier applied escalating pressure using progressively higher ranking Canadian politicians on their visits to Kabul.[191]

Another incremental step was to re-activate the Canadian ETTs but this time under NATO auspices. In 'NATO-ese' ETTs were called Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams. The difference was that the OMLTs did not provide logistics support to their

Afghan counterparts; that was, confusingly, the job of the American (and thus Operation ENDURING FREEDOM) forward logistics teams. This move permitted Canadian entry into the NATO bidding process for kandaks.

In any event, the decision was made to activate a Canadian OMLT. Under the command of LCol Jean-Marc Lanthier, 65 members drawn from Royal 22e Régiment battalions in Valcartier formed up in August and deployed in October 2006. The personal relationship between BGen Fraser and the Afghan National Army leadership in Kandahar paid off and the OMLT moved in to work with 2nd Kandak, 1-205 Corps, which was under the command of Lt Col Sherin Shah Kohbandi. LCol Lanthier and his teams worked alongside 2nd Kandak and by Operation BAAZ TSUCKA, the Afghans were back into the fight in Kandahar, though challenges remained on how to integrate an Afghan kandak's planning process with the Canadian battle group's planning process.

Supporting Operations

LCol John Conrad's replacement, LCol Doug LaBrie, arrived more or less in the middle of MEDUSA planning. The new NSE fell onto the same structure that Conrad had to work with, with approximately the same number of personnel: 245. The NSE situation was alleviated somewhat in that the TF 3-06 battle group was not ranging out to Helmand and, over time, FOB Martello was reduced, handed off, and then closed. This allowed the NSE to focus on how to support the operation in Zharey and Panjwayi. An NSE Forward was set up at Patrol Base Wilson, where two days of stocks were held and the logistics operations could be better coordinated and controlled. The manoeuvring units held a further two days of supplies in their echelons. Combat logistics patrols protected by the NCE Force Protection Platoon moved back and forth from KAF to Patrol Base Wilson. Maximum use of locally contracted transport (the 'Jingle Trucks') was used for non-military equipment whenever possible. Mobile recovery teams were detached to the battle group, one per company.[192]

When the strong points and forward operating bases were put into Panjwayi and Zharey in October 2006, this increased the pressure on the NSE and the vulnerability of its forces. NSE detachments were established for Ma'Sum Ghar and Sperwan Ghar. The lack of Canadian helicopters meant that all of these facilities, which went from one in August to eight by October, had to be supplied by ground. The enemy recognized this and shifted IED resources to Route Fosters east in order to interfere with the logistics pipeline. It is crucial to note here that the NSE combat logistics patrols had to be very disciplined while transiting Kandahar City. The misuse of force resulting in the death of a civilian could have escalated into rioting, which in turn would have been exploited by the insurgency. During this rotation, NSE patrols had to use 27 escalations of force, that is, fire warning shots directed at vehicles they believed might be laden with IEDs. There were no civilian casualties in any of these incidents.[193]

One particular combat logistics patrol stood out in fall 2006. A patrol travelling from KAF with artillery ammunition was hit with a suicide vehicle-borne IED on Highway 4 just outside Kandahar City. The 'zoom-boom' unloading vehicle was destroyed and the trailer it was on was damaged, while four civilians were killed by the blast. The damaged vehicles were deposited at Camp Nathan Smith while the patrol continued on to Patrol Base Wilson. At Wilson, the artillery battery resupply vehicle did not arrive, so half of the patrol moved on to where the M-777 guns were located: in the Dasht northwest of Patrol Base Wilson. Once the patrol returned, the Taliban mortared it. On the way back through the city, the patrol was ambushed with RPGs. A Bison mobile recovery team crew returned fire with a C-9, suppressing the ambush, but the crew commander was shot through the neck. The patrol continued to the entrance of KAF on Highway 4 and then flipped a vehicle into the ditch as it tried to take a tight turn. A mobile repair team eventually handled the recovery as a helicopter evacuated the wounded.[194]

LCol LaBrie and his planned replacement for Roto 3, LCol Chuck Mathé, discussed the problems during Mathé's recce in September 2006. The existing force structure needed to increase by 80 personnel to remain viable. With the incoming force enhancement capabilities, particularly the Leopards and Badgers plus the additional infantry company's LAV IIIs, a further 95 support personnel would be needed to keep the battle group and PRT operational.[195]

These requirements were not fully addressed in late 2006 but had an impact on the Roto 3 NSE. LCol LaBrie was, however, successful in getting Ottawa to replace the worn out battle group vehicles, on a one-to-one basis. TF Orion's venerable but tired LAV IIIs, after some use by TF 3-06, were sent back to Canada via the Intermediate Support Base in Turkey for rebuild while new machines were flown in.[196] Similarly, worn-out semi-armoured HLVW trucks from the previous rotation were replaced with newer upgraded and up-armoured vehicles flown in from Canada. The older HLVW were then used to form the administration company echelon to support the battle group. A new heavy engineer support vehicle was also deployed at this time. These upgrades significantly improved morale in the NSE combat logistics patrol teams.[197]

The manpower situation was so bad that LCol LaBrie had to shut down some logistics and support operations at KAF, and deploy those soldiers out on combat logistics patrols and other duties in the forward operating bases. This in turn freed up infantry from having to handle force protection at Patrol Base Wilson and increased the number of 'effectives' on operations. There were simply not enough personnel. Eventually Public Works and Government Services Canada sorted out its peacetime glacier-like contracting process and Canadian Forces Contractor Augmentation Program civilian augmentees arrived at KAF to handle stores and certain signals functions. This relieved some of the pressure.[198]

The NSE force protection platoon soldiers were mostly reservists who were university students in civilian life. Many did not have a military driving licence prior to deployment training, but in weeks, they were qualified to man the RG-31 escort vehicles. Sortieing from KAF on a daily basis, the combat logistics patrols had to travel along Highway 4 and then pass through Kandahar City before reaching their delivery points west in Zharey and Panjwayi districts. The city seemed like a separate theatre of war in that the threat came from suicide attacks, car bombs and ambushes in built-up urban areas, not mortars and direct fire in a rural setting. These soldiers became the experts at traversing this environment, knowing where to look, knowing what not to shoot at, and how to react in a congested environment. Some of the soldiers from the battle group said that they preferred the stand-up fight in Zharey to what the NSE force protection had to do for combat logistics patrol operations. The enemy always knew when the combat logistics patrol was coming: there were only so many ways to get through the city and there were uncountable opportunities for ambushes and IED attacks.[199]

The pattern of enemy IED use remained similar to that of the TF Orion days. However, the Canadian counter-IED capability did expand. The existing TF IED Defeat team, which was essentially a Technical Assistance Visit, was augmented in August with a Device Exploitation Team and an electronic countermeasures advisor. They continued the existing relationship with the American TF Paladin and its British equivalents, but then took things one step further by supporting the establishment of the Regional Command (South) Counter-IED Task Force. The counter-IED teams exploited 29 sites and conducted in-theatre training for 2 500 incoming Canadian troops. All of the Canadian IED personnel were grouped together to form the "Counter-IED" organization late in 2006.

Of note, Canada also sent a forensic technician to augment the American IED laboratory at Bagram Air Base. The exploitation teams were able to uncover "bio positive" information on suicide attackers and bomb makers in 63% of the sites exploited (this compared to a 10% standard used by police in Canada).[200] This bio information was added into the counter-IED intelligence databases, waiting to be corroborated with other information as part of the larger IED intelligence picture in Afghanistan. From this information came targeting data on IED networks and specific bomb makers.

Finally, and most importantly, the first Detainee Transfer Facility was constructed at KAF. Manned by KAF-based Military Police led by Maj James Fraser, the Detainee Transfer Facility was initially quite rudimentary: tents and barbed wire inside a compound surrounded by logistics storage areas. The existing 2005 Hillier-Wardak agreement remained in place: detainees taken by Canadian units in the field were to be transferred to Afghan authorities as soon as feasible. There were doctrinal challenges, however. The Canadian Army had not really taken prisoners since the Korean War. Peacekeeping operations contributed to this mindset, though

Military Police during the Cold War did have prisoner handling doctrine. The issue here was that the Canadian Army was in effect aiding the Government of Afghanistan and dealing with what were, ostensibly at least, internal insurgents and not technically prisoners of war. The legal complications of this situation challenged the whole Canadian system over the course of the next year.[201]

Operations in November 2006

TF 3-06 continued to work on the road, man the strong points and forward operating bases, and the NSE continued to sustain them while small bands of insurgents regularly emptied the magazines of their small arms at soldiers from all three organizations. Combat logistics patrols were on the receiving end of IED attacks on several occasions. A suicide IED wounded two Canadians and killed two civilians at the "Golden Arches" on Highway 4. Even E Battery lost an HLVW truck to a pressure-plate IED, with two more Canadians wounded. An RCR patrol sortieing from Strong Point North to clear a grape drying hut suffered a mine strike, with two seriously wounded. Over near Sperwan Ghar, the situation had quieted down but in late November, there was resumed enemy activity. A TF 31/ISTAR patrol ambushed a pair of insurgents and then, using known Taliban radio frequencies, requested urgent reinforcements in Pashto. As the enemy numbers grew, a Coyote QRF deployed to hit them, while E Battery dropped 81mm mortar rounds. An A-10 joined the fight with four 500-pound bombs. There were 35 confirmed enemy dead. While the battle damage was under assessment, another enemy force arrived and a prolonged TIC began. Maj Lussier's Coyotes formed the firebase for the TF 31 manoeuvre, and the mortars and A-10s engaged what was assessed to be a platoon-sized force. A running battle developed as the insurgents tried to escape south and they were engaged on several occasions until destroyed.[202]

Tragically, 1 RCR lost its Regimental Sergeant Major on 27 November 2006. CWO Bobby Girouard and his driver, Cpl Albert Storm, were both killed when their Bison armoured personnel carrier was attacked by a suicide vehicle-borne IED early in the morning on Highway 4. These killings were a severe psychological body blow to a task force that had already taken 16 dead and nearly 100 wounded. This killing personally affected LCol Lavoie. As a portent, a Combat Logistics Patrol traversing Route FOSTERS east struck an IED, wounding one soldier. This was the first attack of many on this vital main service route.

Canada became involved with an effort to broker peace in Zharey and Panjwayi districts. This was a joint effort between the Regional Command (South), the Canadian NCE, and the PRT. The main Afghan leader present was Habibullah Jan, with the meetings held at the Sherzai compound instead of the Governor's Palace. The Zharey elders presented

their policy: they wanted the Taliban to leave Zharey; they wanted ISAF to stop causing destruction in the district; local Taliban should stack arms and help rebuild the community; and all Afghan police and army checkpoints should leave the district, though the ones on Highway 1 could remain. Furthermore, they wanted to elect the district leader and chief of police democratically. They would provide people for security. Most importantly, the elders wanted ISAF to talk to them directly so they could assist in rectifying any problems. The coalition response was that the local Taliban had to join the PTS amnesty program and that ANAP training be done for the local security people. Once ISAF was happy that the auxiliary police were doing their jobs effectively, then reconstruction contractors would be allowed to move in. The elders agreed to take this back to the people.[203]

During a follow-up meeting on 25 November, the Panjwayi elders essentially repeated the same policy, with Habibullah Jan present. It seemed to the Canadian participants that Jan was pushing for a Kandahar equivalent to the controversial Musa Qala agreement, which the British brokered in Helmand. In that case, the British agreed to leave the area if the Afghans policed it themselves but as it turned out, it became a safe haven for insurgents who would blow the British up and then retreat to Musa Qala where they were not subject to attack, nor were they 'policed' by the Afghans.

During these discussions, the ISAF participants wanted Ahmad Wali Karzai involved in the discussions, but it emerged from the elders that they did not trust Ahmad Wali Karzai and Canadian personnel recognized there was a split between him and Habibullah Jan. When all was said and done, the ISAF representatives stated that no agreement could really be reached without the participation of the Governor or the leader of the Provincial Council. Indeed, further discussions risked alienating Karzai and Khalid.[204]

At the end of these meetings, Raziq Sherzai told the ISAF and Canadian participants he believed that "Ahmad Wali Karzai is attempting to prevent contact between ISAF and local people in the region west of Kandahar, and that he is actively working to prevent a cessation of hostilities in the region."[205] When the idea of having a larger shura to deal with Zharey and Panjwayi with Ahmad Wali Karzai and Habibullah Jan's participation was raised with the Governor, Khalid stated that "he doubted Habibullah Jan would attend. He stated emphatically that he [Khalid] did not work for Ahmad Wali Karzai and appeared to take offense at the apparent suggestion." The PRT was able to glean that there was a "rift between Ahmad Wali Karzai and Habibullah Jan, which has split the bulk of Kandahar notables in half."[206] It was unclear to the Canadians exactly what that rift was over, but it interfered with any resolution of the Zharey and Panjwayi problem.

Operation BAAZ TSUKA: December 2006-January 2007

According to officers in the new Regional Command (South) HQ, Maj Gen Van Loon was unhappy with the level of violence used during MEDUSA and this became a shaping event for him. He viewed MEDUSA as incomplete and, in search of a large operation to get the moving parts working again, Operation MEDUSA Phase 4 evolved into Operation BAAZ TSUKA ('Falcon's Summit'), an operation that would ultimately carry over as Canadian task forces rotated in January-February 2007. BAAZ TSUKA was designed to establish the Kandahar ADZ. The operating principles for the new operation revolved around key leader engagements, information operations and psychological operations all with the objective of influencing without necessarily killing people with massed artillery and close air support. Van Loon wanted to dictate the pace of operations at the Regional Command (South) level throughout this area of operations and not allow it to devolve to the national battle group or task force level.[207]

At the same time, and in contrast with BGen Fraser's belief in the decreasing effectiveness of special operations forces' kill/capture operations during his time, Van Loon introduced a more sophisticated leadership targeting process at Regional Command (South) headquarters. This stemmed from his interest in link analysis between the "tribals," "narcos" and other players. A lot of effort was put into determining the effects of removing certain players, who could be "touched" and who should not be. Very high-level link analysis was done to deconflict Regional Command (South) SOF targeting with non-ISAF SOF organizations. A special target fusion cell was formed to do this as many of the same personalities appeared on both lists. In the future, each large-scale operation would have a target set to be deconflicted – there would be no more superimposition of American Tier 1 SOF into the battlespace in the middle of these operations – at least in theory.[208]

BAAZ TSUKA was structured to "avoid Taliban strengths and focus on information operations supported by manoeuvre." The idea was that "have nots" in what Regional Command (South) simplistically called "the Ghilzai tribe" in Zharey and Panjwayi were apparently the target audience of the plan. Van Loon's Regional Command (South) staff believed that there were two "tiers" of Taliban: a hard core, which was not necessarily from the area, and local Taliban. They believed that a series of manoeuvres coupled with selective removal by special operations forces of some key enemy leaders would generate pressure to cause local Taliban leaders to demand that the hard core leave the districts. A combination of humanitarian aid, police and governance would descend on the districts and extend the Program Takhim-e Sohl hand of friendship. Regional Command (South) planners optimistically believed that "Upon completion of the operation, Canadian forces would still be required in the region until sufficient local ANAP are recruited to provide security." Then the Canadians could go home.[209]

Authorities in Ottawa were watching carefully as BAAZ TSUKA evolved in late November-early December 2006. NATO had its annual high-level meetings, this time in Riga, and Canada was pushing hard for more NATO members to participate in southern Afghanistan. None was forthcoming. Alliance observer Nile Gardiner put the frustrations of the day most cogently:

> Germany, France, Turkey, Italy, and Spain have all rejected calls to send their own soldiers to support British, Canadian, and Dutch forces in the south, on the grounds that the situation is too dangerous and that they are "overstretched." Only Poland has stepped forward.... Many major European Union countries are deploying militarily neutered forces in Afghanistan, commanded by lackluster political leaders petrified of the public reaction to troop casualties, and refusing to redeploy their soldiers to the south for military operations against the Taliban. This is a sorry spectacle that makes a mockery of Europe's professed commitment to the war on terrorism. NATO is a war-fighting alliance, not a glorified peacekeeping group.[210]

Ottawa's concerns now regarding BAAZ TSUKA were: a) casualties; and b) whether Canadian commanders thought there was too much use of Canadian troops by others who refused to do the 'heavy lifting.' The message to JTF-A was clear: do not get decisively engaged on any front.[211]

Operation BAAZ TSUKA was protracted and consisted of many phases and too many sub-phases. Shape, Dislocate and Consolidate were the main phases. "Dislocate" had four sub-phases: Interdict, Disrupt, Secure and Envelop. Each sub-phase was farmed out to a separate task force or sub-unit. Broadly put, a British company would screen to the west, while TF 31 conducted a demonstration of capability at Zangabad Ghar. TF 3-06 would push down Highway 1 and secure Howz-e Madad, while a Dutch airmobile company would conduct an air assault over the entire span of Zharey district. (See Figure 11-12)

In Phase 3, in iterations a, b, and c, governance and security would be pushed into the whole district.[212] TF 31 proposed what it called a "Consolidation Plan" for both Zharey district and western Panjwayi district. This proposal involved the establishment of Afghan National Army and police checkpoints in key communities and road junctions in both areas.[213] (See Figure 11-13)

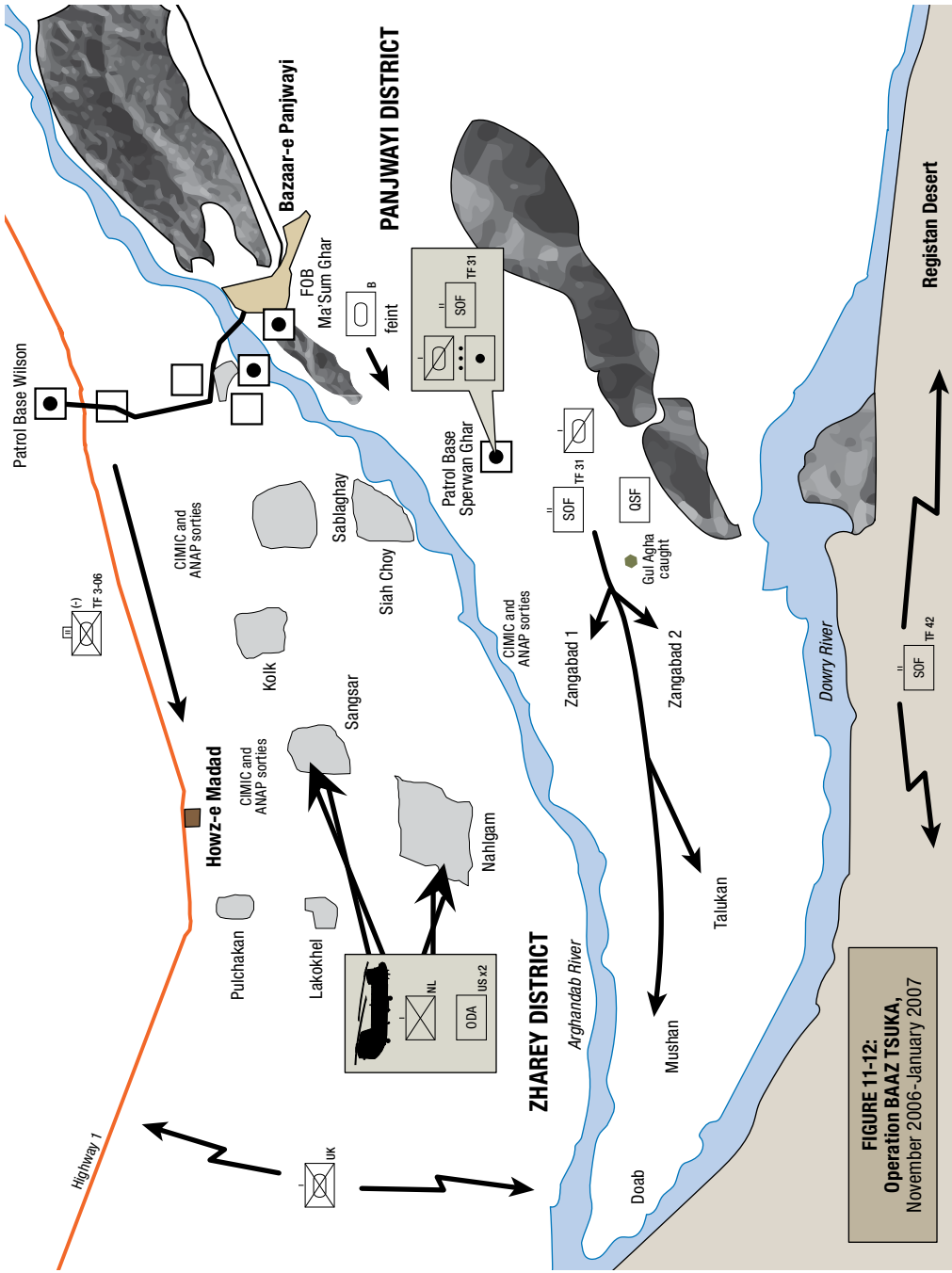


FIGURE 11-12:
Operation BAAZ TSUKA,
November 2006-January 2007

Figure 11-12: Operation BAAZ TSUKA, November 2006-January 2007

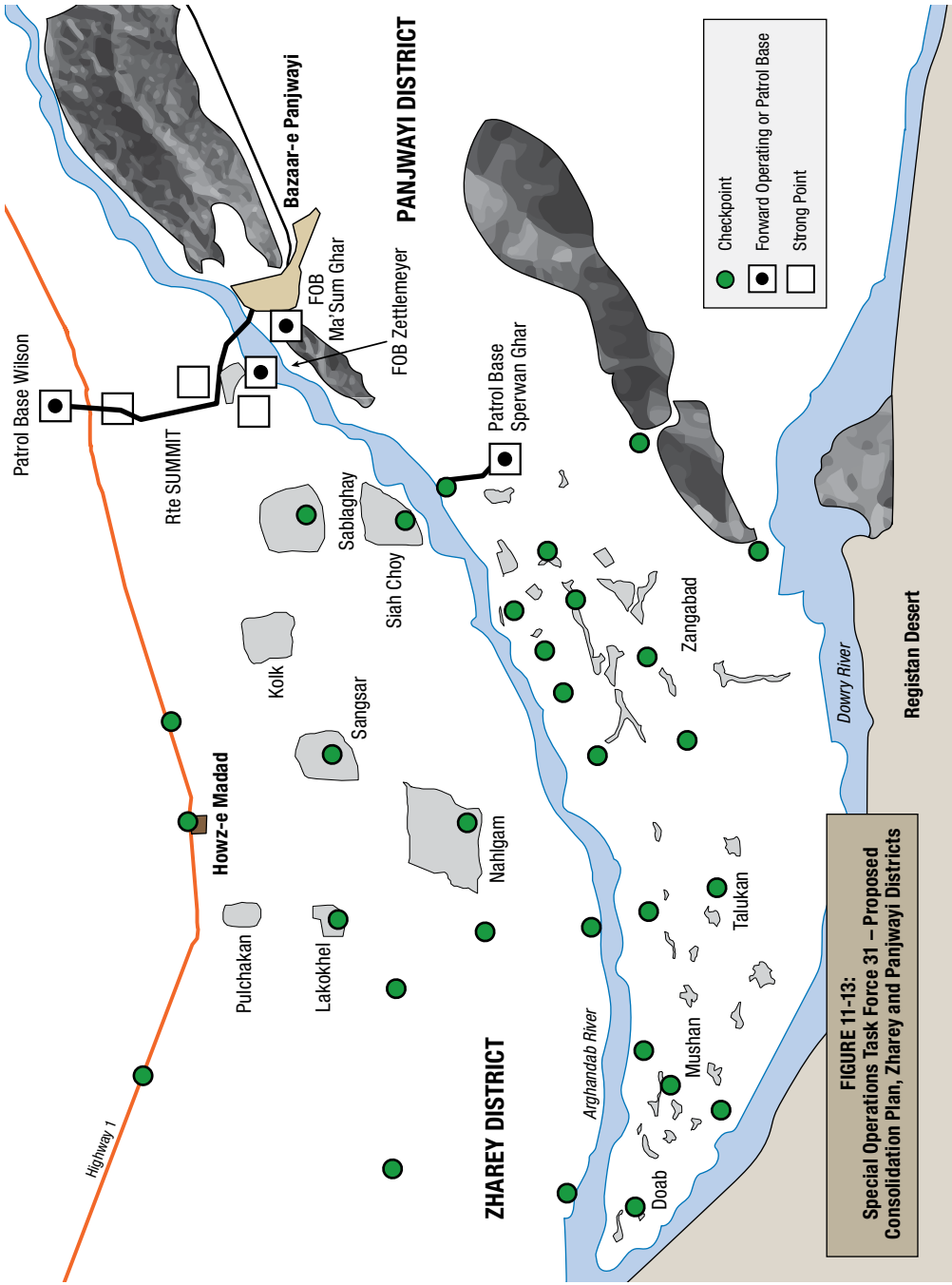


Figure 11-13: Special Operations Task Force 31 – Proposed Consolidation Plan, Zharey and Panjwayi Districts

Regional Command (South) assessed the enemy at this time as consisting of 400 to 600 fighters deployed in an arc from Sangsar, Siah Choy, Zangabad Ghar and Zangabad, with a command node in Nahlgam and a logistics node in Band-e Timor. An early warning system was assessed to exist forward of this arc.[214]

TF 3-06 focused almost solely on the bazaar town of Howz-e Madad on Highway 1. Home to Abdul Khaliq, a Taliban personality in Zharey district, clearing and holding Howz-e Madad would facilitate security on Highway 1, and pose a threat to Sangsar, one of Mullah Omar's purported family homes (the other was in Deh Rawod in Oruzgan province) and its pro-Taliban 'heavy mob.' The tanks would feint out of Ma'Sum Ghar down Fosters toward Zangabad Ghar, while the rest of the battle group with the Afghan National Army and ANAP in tow would set up a perimeter around Howz-e Madad. The Afghan National Army and ANAP would cordon and search, bring in LCol Hetherington's CIMIC teams and aid from the PRT, and leave a police presence behind. In the Phase 3 operations, TF 3-06 would man the Summit forward operating bases and strong points. Six "boxes" would be established between Route Summit and the 'arc' of enemy base towns. A company plus an Afghan company working with the PRT would sortie into these boxes and, if there were enough police and army resources, clear and secure them.[215]

While the planners were working out BAAZ TSUKA, the enemy noticed vulnerabilities in the coalition dispositions and went to work. Correctly identifying that Route Fosters was TF 3-06 and TF 31's main service route, three IED strikes were conducted against combat logistics patrols from 4 to 6 December. One of these resulted in four Canadian wounded.[216]

There were more refinements to the plan. TF 42, the British SOF task force, was now responsible for interdicting the Panjwayi-Reg Desert boundary. The Americans pledged the continued use of TF 31. In this case four ODAs, each with an Afghan infantry company, would operate from Sperwan Ghar west along the horn of Panjwayi and seize it.[217]

Operation BAAZ TSUKA's manoeuvre went according to plan. All of the moves dictated by the plan occurred: A British company moved into the Maywand/Zharey district boundary area. The tanks conducted a feint and then headed with the combined Canadian-Afghan force for Howz-e Madad and secured it. TF 31 rapidly moved out and seized Mushan, Talukan 1, Zangabad-2 and Zangabad-1 each with an ODA and an Afghan infantry company. Zangabad Ghar was taken with an ODA. ISTAR Squadron supported these operations with snipers and Coyotes. The Dutch Airmobile Company and two TF-31 ODAs assaulted Nahlgam and Sangsar. TF 3-06 sucked back to the SUMMIT strong points and prepared to mount operations into the boxes to the west and clear them.

During the course of these manoeuvres, however, there was very little contact. An estimated 38 insurgents were targeted and engaged over the course of three days. What was interesting and useful, however, was the elimination of three Taliban leadership targets:

Haji Mullah Sahib, Gul Agha and Mullah Sher Jan. ISTAR Squadron sub-units and TF 31 operators observed the arrival of the "Qandahar Security Force" and its OGA mentors on the battlefield in unmarked Mi-17 helicopters and sports utility vehicles into Zangabad shortly before TF 31 and ISTAR Squadron stepped off to move west.[218] Gul Agha was a significant "money man" to the Taliban, a key financier. One analysis suggested that when those three were eliminated, the Zharey and Panjwayi insurgent structures cached their weapons and went home.[219]

Operation BAAZ TSUKA was a lot of coalition effort to net less than 40 enemy dead. The operation's legacy was decisive in another way. TF Kandahar, and Regional Command (South) for that matter, now had a series of defended locations to hold in an arc from Howz-e Madad to Patrol Base Wilson, down through the SUMMIT strong points, to Ma'Sum Ghar, to Sperwan Ghar, Zangabad, Talukan and Mushan. What next? According to the plan, local elders activated via key leader engagements and supported with humanitarian assistance were supposed to generate men from their communities to be trained as ANAP. However, only the western part of Zharey was populated, and in the small government-controlled areas, no one was joining the ANAP. Moreover, there was not enough Afghan National Police to handle all of these locations. According to one of his company commanders, LCol Lavoie "was on the phone every night to the G3/5 and the CHOPS, trying to get any kind of police presence in the area."[220] As for eastern Zharey, there was no substantial resettlement, so the effects that Regional Command (South) and TF Kandahar wanted from reconstruction and security could not be generated.

CEFCOM's assessment of the situation in December 2006 asserted that "The 1 RCR battle group has now been forced into a defensive posture with a force structure that restricts operations to other parts of the area of operations." This was a direct result of the Afghan National Army "showing only modest progress" and the Afghan National Police "abandoning its supporting role on Route Summit."[221] Canada and its partners were now fixed in place in Zharey and Panjwayi districts. There was little or no reconstruction work being done in almost all of Kandahar's districts, let alone the districts that were supposed to be part of the ADZ.

By early December 2006, B Squadron was ensconced at the now growing FOB Ma'Sum Ghar. "MSG," as it was colloquially designated, took the original compound complex in the flat area, and built around it. 23 Field Squadron bulldozed tank run-ups all over the Ghar and constructed bunkers for the Afghan National Army on the high features. The Artillery world flew in a HALO counter-bombardment system, and its antennas joined the multitude of communications systems sprouting up. The NSE moved a detachment in, followed by 'Tango Maintenance,' the electrical and mechanical engineers responsible for

the Leopard tanks and Badger AEVs. Ma'Sum Ghar was becoming a stationary battleship of sorts, in the middle of Zharey and Panjwayi district, with towers and turrets pointing in every direction. The forward operating base attracted its share of enemy attention – this time 107mm rockets similar to those lofted at KAF, plus mortars and small-arms fire.

B Squadron had three troops of Leopard C-2 tanks armed with 105mm guns. The C-2 variant also had night-fighting equipment. In the run-up positions, the Leopards could shoot at any target out to two kilometres. Starting on 3 December, a 107mm rocket team was engaged and destroyed by one of the tanks. The flat trajectory of the 105mm high-explosive anti-tank round made it extremely accurate. A week later, an 82mm mortar opened up on Ma'Sum Ghar: it was also dispatched with 105mm fire. Maj Cadieu's armoured soldiers, working with their Recce and Artillery colleagues, developed tactics whereby direct fire would take out the target, and artillery would be called in to cut off and destroy enemy fighters that dispersed or escaped the first shot. Local insurgents became wary moving around Ma'Sum Ghar.[222]

Enemy objectives changed and they moved to take on the Summit strong points yet again. From 7 to 11 December, the insurgents mounted three separate attacks. In all three attacks, B Squadron had either a troop present at a strong point or a troop in a run-up position providing support to B Company. An insurgent platoon went after Strong Points North and Centre: 105mm fire took out 12 enemy fighters. An RPG volley against Strong Point West on 9 December resulted in two enemy RPG gunners killed. In an assault on an Afghan National Army checkpoint on Summit, another enemy anti-tank team was dispatched with tank fire.[223] (See Figure 11-14)

That did not stop the insurgency, however. Shifting tactics, the enemy mounted a major attack on Strong Point West on the night of 29 December. Strong Point West dominated the Pashmul area, particularly the cemetery area that the insurgency used as a rally point going back to July 2006. B Company regularly put out clearance patrols from the strong points and encountered handfuls of returnees, which B Company was sure had a high proportion of insurgents. That evening, a LAV III crew in a run-up position saw a group of men unpacking a large object in a building adjacent to the strong point. Because of restrictive rules of engagement, B Company could not engage them until the object fired an 82mm high-explosive anti-tank round at hull-down LAV III and three machine guns opened up on the Canadian position. Maj Abthorpe detected 20 insurgents moving into an adjacent grape field, preparing to assault. An enemy anti-tank weapon took out the LAV III turret, rendering it inoperative but not killing the crew.[224]

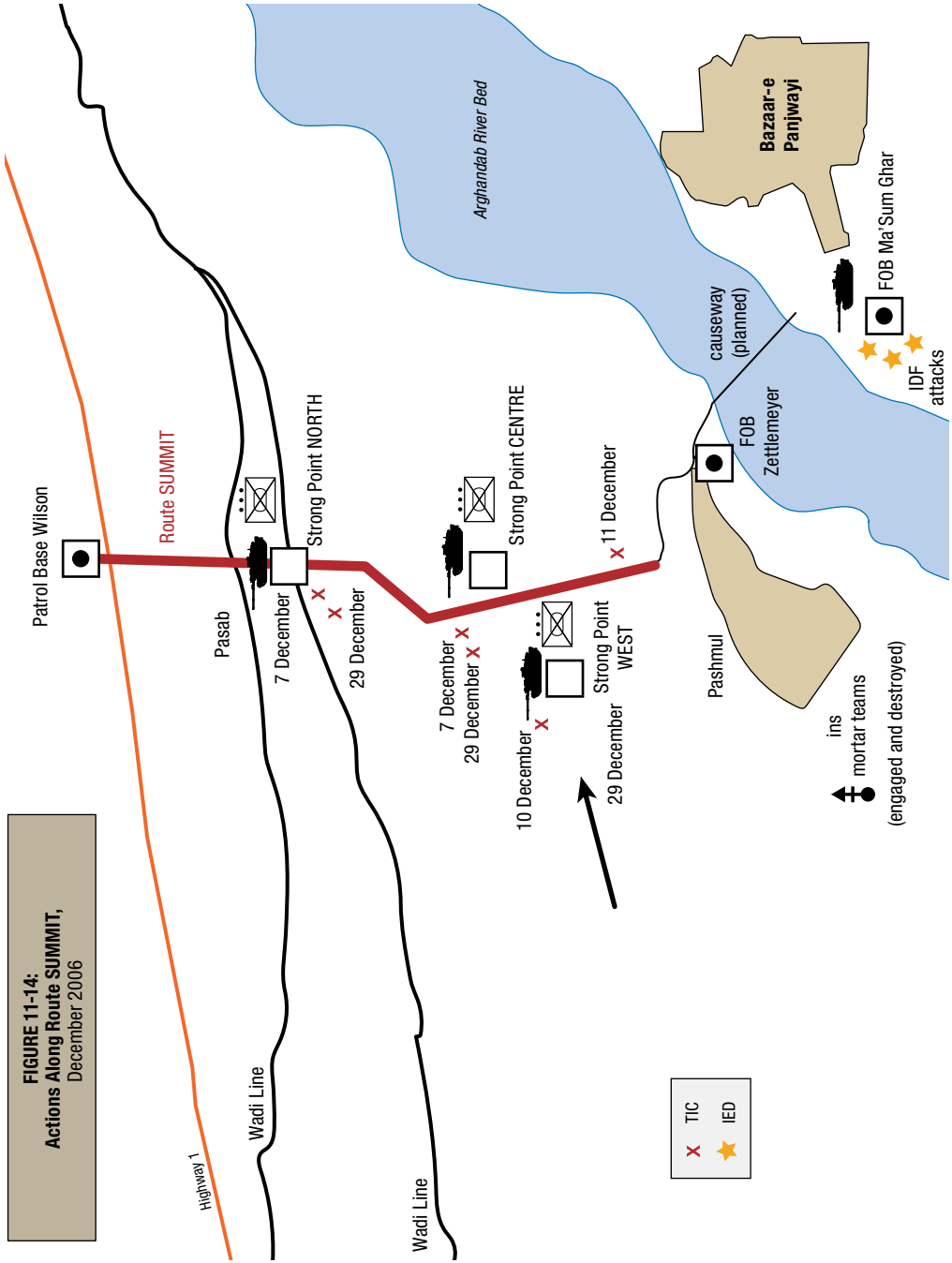


Figure 11-14: Operations in Zharey and Panjwayi Districts, December 2006

Up the road, all of the other strong points came under simultaneous, concentrated small-arms fire. Back at Strong Point West, the Company Headquarters LAV IIIs opened up on the enemy assault force while the platoon in the strong point laid down artillery fire from E Battery but a bad correction landed the rounds right next to the strong point – and coincidentally right on enemy fighters that had reached it. The forward observation officer 'walked' the fire back to the west, using it to push the enemy back. The firing stopped and Maj Abthorpe prepared to close the TIC; Maj Jay Harvey got on the radio and told him they were watching the action from an MQ-1 Predator and a TUAV. Back at the battle group Tactical Operations Centre, they could see 20 insurgents that had survived the artillery but they could also see two waves of fighters that were rallying behind the cemetery, an estimated 65 to 80 fighters in each wave. B Company's platoon and headquarters were by this time running low on ammo. The 155mm rounds kept landing while LCol Lavoie ordered Maj Cadieu's B Squadron into action. Two troops of Leopard C-2s arrived from Ma'Sum Ghar and deployed in a 'ring of steel' around Strong Point West, killing an estimated nine insurgents.[225]

After the battle of Strong Point West, the enemy reverted back to IEDs and small-arms ambushes in Route Summit. TF 3-06 mounted a series of four combat team-sized disrupt operations into early January 2007. Combining the Leopard squadron with an infantry company (sometimes Canadian, sometime Afghan with Canadian OMLT) and Canadian armoured engineers, TF 3-06 secured Howz-e Madad, conducted clearance operations west of Route SUMMIT, raided Siah Choy and secured a location for a British sensitive site exploitation team. These operations used a similar approach. Plow tanks led in open terrain, while Badger AEVs and dozer tanks led in closed terrain to mitigate enemy IED use. The dozer tanks plowed 'herring bone' run-ups for the infantry in their LAV IIIs behind the breaching vehicles while the breach was in progress. Infantry cleared suspicious locations. Once the tanks had over-watch around the target area, the infantry and engineers cleared the objective. Then the combat team withdrew by another route.[226] CIMIC was brought in to handle manoeuvre damage claims and that required some form of governance in Zharey district.

Provincial Reconstruction Team Practicalities and Afghan Development Zone

The efforts by the Government of Afghanistan to get the National Solidarity Programme underway in Kandahar Province were overshadowed at this time by the other operations in Zharey and Panjwayi districts. CIDA proved useful in that its personnel were in a position to monitor, at arm's length, how well the Community Development Councils and District Development Assemblies were taking shape through their contacts with UN Habitat, the implementing partner with the National Solidarity Programme. Indeed, the PRT started to use the number of active CDC's and DDA's in the province and especially in contested areas as a measurement of success around this time.

The National Solidarity Programme was active in seven of Kandahar's 17 districts as of November 2006. The number of Community Development Councils and the number of approved projects in each district served as (extremely) rough guides as to progress. Dand, for example, had 133 elected Community Development Councils with 325 approved projects. Panjwayi, on the other hand, had 27 CDCs and 15 approved projects. Projects, in this case, amounted to irrigation canals and dam diversions, drainage, road culverts, power supply, sewing machine distribution, wells, pumps and reservoirs. Almost none of the projects were in any stage of completion, however, because of the lack of money flow through non-existent District Development Assemblies and a moribund Provincial Development Committee. This increasingly caused credibility problems with the local population. The NSP-supported districts were, notably, Maywand, Panjwayi, Zharey, Arghandab, Dand, Daman and Shiga – pretty much the ADZ and along the vital Highway 1 route. The rest were essentially left to fend for themselves.[227]

The PRT's main success story in the latter half of 2006 were the connections made with the government, which facilitated the return of the population to parts of Zharey and Panjwayi districts. With the arrival of a consolidated Force Protection Company from the Van Doos battalions in December, the PRT was able to reorganize its CIMIC detachments, as they were no longer dependent on the battle group for protection and security. The Van Doos brought with them two LAV III platoons and a host of RG-31s. This significantly increased mobility and dramatically facilitated PRT operations. It also helped the OGDs relax their severe security restrictions, which in turn facilitated their activities: even Corrections Canada sent a two-man team to assess the Afghan incarceration system. It also freed-up battle group troops for other tasks. Gavin Buchan from DFAIT calculated that the arrival of the Force Protection Company increased the PRT "sortie" rate from two lines of tasking per day to eight and nine lines of tasking per day. The dramatically increased "volume of contact" with Kandahari power brokers was significant in restoring Canadian government influence to pre-Berry assassination levels by January 2007.[228]

The PRT's role in Operation BAAZ TSUKA was facilitated by the new capability. CIMIC detachments were able to deliver "Material Assistance" (militarily politically correct language for "Humanitarian Assistance" and reflected the increasingly shrill cries of the non-governmental organization community about respecting "humanitarian space"), in the form of "CIMIC Bombs": these were sea containers with organized loads of tools, food, and so on that could be delivered by 'Jingle Truck' contracted transport or by the NSE to an area that was being re-populated. Another related concept was the "Cop-in-a-Box" where modified and equipped sea containers became the basis for portable and deployable police checkpoints.

Photo Credit: DND IS2006-0388

Provincial Reconstruction Team commander, LCol Simon Hetherington, flanked by Maj Harjit Sajjan and a USAID representative, Ashley Abbott, work with the Panjwayi district shura to mitigate the effects of military operations in the area.

The PRT was able to focus on returnees throughout January 2007. A photo-op with the Governor leading a couple of hundred people back to Sperwan was orchestrated with the re-opening of the Sperwan school, the delivery of 'Material Assistance' and the holding of a large shura with local elders: a Village Medical Outreach was also scheduled into events for synergy. Another followed on 10 January in Zangabad, with 200 families. Toward the end of the month, 161 people returned to Pasab in Zharey, and 100 to Musa Khan. For the most part, however, eastern Zharey remained unpopulated.[229]

Another overlooked area was Kandahar City, the heart of the ADZ itself. When Maj Gen Van Loon took over in November, he directed that a contingency plan, initially called BAAZ and later BAAZ SATYR, be formulated so he could "refocus attention away from [the] Operation MEDUSA [area of operation] toward what has always been our centre of gravity, the population of the Kandahar ADZ. The effect I want to achieve is that both local and international audiences realize the improved situation [in Kandahar City]…."[230] BAAZ was completely city-centric. Special operations forces would shape in "red" areas, while the PRT, with its incoming force protection company augmented with Dutch PSYOPS, would conduct joint patrols with police. It appeared as though the objective of contingency plan BAAZ was to give the impression of security so that the ADZ could be formally established and a victory declared.

The PRT, however, was unenthusiastic. They were not convinced that enough of the city was pro-government to attempt this informations operations stunt and they believed that the Afghan police should be supported with a second-row approach, something that would bolster the better message that Afghans were in charge. In any event, the PRT command structure was not organized to command dismounted patrolling in the city.[231]

Van Loon then wanted to deploy a Dutch company into the city as an alternative. However, Canadian planners learned that UNAMA, who asserted that there was more enemy control over the city than Canadian assessments claimed, influenced him. Van Loon thought more forces in the city would facilitate development activity. When word got out, the non-governmental organization community, the UN in Kandahar and the deputy governor violently opposed the idea. In their view, it was better to root out terrorists with police and special operations forces rather than getting involved in heavy urban combat which would likely draw in more and more enemy fighters and would produce severe damage to the city and its inhabitants.[232]

With all the manoeuvring west of the city, people forgot there was a problem inside the city itself. Canadian planners noted that Regional Command (South) intelligence people kept cutting and pasting the same generalized data into their briefings time and time again. When the All Source Intelligence Centre did its own analysis, it confirmed that the enemy had expanded their presence in the northern "cone" of the city, the Loy Wala district. Mullahs were more and more vociferous in their stance against ISAF and the government, and this influence spilled into the eastern districts of the city. Loy Wala seemed to be more and more like a "no-go" area, and it fed IED attacks on Highway 1 west of the city, but most importantly, it also supported attacks on Highway 4 to KAF and Highway 1 east to Zabul province.

JTF-A's analysis led to two projects. First was the idea of a Kandahar City southern bypass, which would permit ISAF forces in KAF to deploy west without going through the city itself. Second was Operation PORTCULLIS. There were four existing checkpoints into the city, basically at the cardinal points. PORTCULLIS proposed 12 police-manned checkpoints covering all of the primary entryways and deployed with some depth, particularly on the eastern approaches which were IED-problematic.

For a variety of reasons, the bypass idea was slow to develop and extremely problematic. It was not until 2011 that the semblance of a bypass was completed. But PORTCULLIS was attractive. The PRT played a key role in its development, mostly because Canadian policing expertise resided there. To make up for German deficiencies in the police capacity development area, Canada was able to deploy three more civilian police advisors to the PRT, which increased the number to five. Their contacts with the Afghan National Police coupled with the relationships established with the government by LCol Hetherington and his staffs were key aspects of shaping the plan.[233] Keep in mind that attempts had been made as far back as 2005 by the PRT to assess the status of the existing Afghan National Police dispositions and capability.

The idea underlying PORTCULLIS was the previously mentioned 'Cop-in-a-Box.' Temporary vehicle checkpoints consisting of HESCO bastion walls and sea containers could readily be put up until more permanent police sub-stations were built. The increased presence in the planned PORTCULLIS locations was deemed critical, particularly on Highway 4, which was scheduled to have four checkpoints.[234] As usual, the issue was the lack of Afghan National Police. With the new emphasis on the ANAP, the pseudo-militia, there was a competition for resources at the regional training centers.

The policing situation in Canadian areas of interest outside the city remained problematic. PRT CIMIC, for example, identified multiple separate, uncoordinated police organizations operating in Zharey district. The Afghan National Police, controlled by a Col Akka, had four checkpoints near Howz-e Madad, two in Senjaray, one at the Zharey district centre, two at internally displaced persons camps north of the highway and another at Maku – all along Highway 1. There was a 'Highway patrol' operating from Pasab, also along Highway 1. Another Afghan National Police group operated from FOB Zettelmeyer along Route Summit: they reported to Haji Agha Lalai Dastagiri. Habibullah Jan had his own police in Senjaray: they had their own checkpoints in addition to the existing Afghan National Police Highway 1 checkpoints. Yet another Afghan National Police group handled internally displaced persons camp security in Panjwayi, paid for by the Governor. Standby Police Unit 005 or its remnants operated wherever they wanted.[235]

General Asmatullah Alizai, the Kandahar provincial chief of police, was supposed to have authority over Akka, and theoretically, over all of these forces. The reality was that the Governor brought Akka and his men in from Zabul province and deployed them to Zharey district. Akka was antagonistic toward Habibullah Jan and his 'police' in Senjaray; it generated a certain level of tension, which in turn was exploited by the Taliban and made it difficult for the police to get a grip on Zharey and Panjwayi.[236]

While the PRT started the bureaucratic groundwork on PORTCULLIS, the issue remained of how to handle insurgent networks in the city without turning Kandahar City in 2007 into Mogadishu circa 1993. Intelligence data suggested that key enemy commanders from the MEDUSA battles exfiltrated the area and were hiding in Loy Wala. This was not fully addressed by JTF-A at this time, probably because of the focus on the action west of the city while the headquarters was still standing up. For the most part, it was left up to the special operations forces.

In early January 2007, JTF-A established a more refined outlook on Operation SATYR PYRRHA. The planners viewed this as overlapping with Operation BAAZ TSUKA Phase 3. At this point, ISAF HQ intent was to deal with two things: establish the ADZs and keep Highway 1 open through improved security. ISAF decided, contrary to Van Loon's approach, that security would pre-dominate over development in that security

"set the conditions for long-term reconstruction and development," not the other way around. TF Kandahar was to "isolate and neutralize destabilizing elements to provide security and enable reconstruction and development." There were pages and pages of tasks, but within them was the need to develop a plan to control movement through Kandahar City as part of Highway 1 security, which in turn was synergistic with ADZ security.[237]

Conclusions

Operation MEDUSA, not surprisingly, took centre stage during fall 2006. It was one of the larger Canadian operations; it was visibly kinetic in execution, and approximated what media and other observers thought a battle should be. It was also a crucial battle in the Canadian strategic perspective. If MEDUSA had failed, the Canadian government would have probably fallen, which in turn would have had substantial effects on the continuance of Canadian presence in Afghanistan. The possibility of a domino effect on a number of already skittish NATO members was very real. When LGen Gauthier had a one-on-one meeting with Lt Gen Richards in Kabul, he was told that if MEDUSA failed, then NATO would fail.[238]

Operation MEDUSA did, however, take attention and resources away from reconstruction and development efforts for some time. It also forced Canadian commanders to devote the bulk of their resources to part of a single district, Zharey, while engaging in economy of effort in Panjwayi and Shah Wali Kot districts. Little else was accomplished in the designated ADZ. It was only with the deployment of more forces well into the rotation that mobility was restored to the PRT so it could get out and do its job.

The nature of the enemy threat to Kandahar City, however, demanded a clear and unequivocal 'kinetic' operation in that place, at that time. Where TF Orion identified the insurgent problem and bought time with the 3 August Battle vis-à-vis Mullah Naqib and Arghandab district, TF 3-06 reinforced the message that Canada was willing to fight and pay in blood to protect the city and its inhabitants. Collaterally, Operation MEDUSA kept Highway 1 open so that British reinforcements headed to Helmand could continue to deploy and prop up their threatened efforts in that province.

There were, however, unintended effects related to Operation MEDUSA, some negative, and some positive. First, there was internal U.S. Army criticism about the conduct of the operation where MEDUSA was unjustly and derisively referred to as "CANACONDA" behind Canadian backs, which, when this became known, got those backs up, especially the CDS's. There were other unhealthy expressions of petty nationalism in the printed form from both American and Canadian sources. The nature of the battle, elements of which tended toward the conventional with substantial fire support, established an unofficial competitiveness among some Canadian officers who tried to compare their later operations against the supposed "standard" of MEDUSA. One might as well have compared apples with oranges.

Some post-Operation MEDUSA briefings repeatedly over-used the term "since Korea" which, perhaps, heightened the expectations of some as to what fighting in Afghanistan was all about.

The inevitable quest for the Holy Grail of a 'decisive battle' and 'victory' by the amateurs, the media, and the politicians found fertile ground in operations like MEDUSA. When the enemy kept fighting, it was easy for the uneducated to label MEDUSA as a failed operation, despite the behind-the-scenes successes in and around Kandahar province. The psychological effects of MEDUSA on the enemy even played out in places as far away as Regional Command (East) where there were significant theatre-level effects. When CJTF-76 re-cocked to go in and clean out the provinces in Regional Command (East) with Operation MOUNTAIN FURY, American intelligence networks learned that insurgent commanders in all three provinces were closely observing events in Kandahar. As far as one Canadian staff officer in Bagram could determine, "All the bad guys saw the amount of combat power coming in and went 'Fuck THIS!' put their shit down, walked away and went up into the hills – and nothing happened."[239]

The Regional Command (South) designed – and built – Operation BAAZ TSUKA was, however, a failed operation that had long-term consequences for Canada in Kandahar. BAAZ TSUKA was unable to extend coalition control over Zharey district west of Route SUMMIT, while at the same time the operation over-extended coalition forces into western Panjwayi district. There was simply not enough governance and development horsepower put into those areas to hold them, let alone enough security. The key issue here was the lack of police to maintain security after the military forces departed. When Regional Command (South) went after its Holy Grail in Helmand during Operation ACHILLES (see Volume 2), Canada, or at least the incoming TF 1-07, was left holding the proverbial bag. When all was said and done, however, the soldiers of TF 3-06 and their allies took up the torch passed to them by TF Orion and went the distance against an array of insurgent fighters, both foreign and domestic, and gained more than a measure of success under arduous environmental and political conditions.

ENDNOTES

1. There was no functional equivalent to Operation MEDUSA in the other Regional Commands. The reasons for this relate to terrain and the centrality of Kandahar City as opposed to enemy capability. At no time during 2006 were American units in RC (East) confronted with anything comparable to the scale of the enemy effort in Kandahar province.
2. PRT KLE, "Meeting with Governor Asadullah Khalid re: Southern Security Situation" (17 August 2006).
3. Message American Embassy Kabul to State, "PAG Makes First Recommendations to President Karzai" (21 August 2006).

4. CTF Aegis briefing to the author (29 June 2006). The author participated in meetings at CTF Aegis where aspects of the concept were debated.
5. Message American Embassy Kabul to State, "PAG Makes First Recommendations to President Karzai" (21 August 2006).
6. Regional Command (South) continued to name itself CTF Aegis well into the fall of 2006.
7. Interview with LGen David Fraser (28 April 2014).
8. Interview with LCol Shane Schreiber (Edmonton, 16 May 2007).
9. "Meeting with Gov. Asadullah Khalid re: Southern Security Situation" (17 August 2006).
10. Interview with LCol Shane Schreiber (Edmonton, 16 May 2007); Interview with Col Brad Booth (Carlisle, 27 August 2008).
11. Fraser interview.
12. Freakley interview.
13. Email Schreiber to dl "Warning Order-Clear Within Sector Highway 1" (9 August 2006).
14. Interview with Col Brad Booth (Carlisle, 27 August 2008).
15. Interview with LCol Harjit Sajjan (Kandahar, 15 March 2009). See also AAR ASIC "Operation MEDUSA Intelligence Points" (n/d). See also Horn, *No Lack of Courage: Operation Medusa, Afghanistan* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2010), p. 81.
16. Interview with LCol Harjit Sajjan (Kandahar, 15 March 2009).
17. Interview with Lt Col Don Bolduc (Carlisle, August 2008).
18. Fraser interview.
19. Fraser interview.
20. Interview with Col Simon Hetherington (Kandahar, 12 August 2010).
21. Fraser interview.
22. Lavoie interview.
23. Lavoie interview.
24. Lavoie interview.
25. As described in detail in John Conrad, *What the Thunder Said: Reflections of a Canadian Officer in Kandahar* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009).
26. Interview with LCol Mark Gasparotto (Kingston, 22 May 2008).
27. Lavoie interview; Conrad, *What the Thunder Said,* pp. 121-124.
28. Lavoie interview.
29. This section is based on a telephone interview with LCol Mike Wright, 4 October 2011 and a follow-on interview conducted at CFB Shilo on 7 May 2013. I would also like to thank Maj Duncan Redburn for his input.
30. Lavoie interview.
31. Wright interviews.
32. Interview with MWO Mike Jackson, (CFB Shilo, 8 May 2013).
33. Interview with Major Mike Reekie, (CFB Shilo, 8 May 2013).

34. The ratio of 3 wounded for every killed is historically-based for conventional operations and is generally used for planning purposes. In this situation it is impossible to determine the exact figure.
35. Lavoie interview.
36. RC(S) "CTF Aegis Warning Order" (19 August 2006).
37. TF 3-06 "Warning Order 001 to Op MEDUSA" (25 August 2006).
38. One platoon was kept with the PRT for security.
39. Interview with LCol Geoff Abthorpe (Edmonton, 2011).
40. Interview with Major Derek Prohar (Ottawa, 24 October 2012).
41. Rusty Bradley and Kevin Maurer, *Lions of Kandahar: The Story of a Fight Against All Odds* (New York: Bantam Books, 2011), Ch. 7-9. See also 1st Battalion 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) briefing, "SOTF-31 Panjwayi/Pashmul Brief" (n/d).
42. Lipcsey interview.
43. Lavoie interview.
44. RC(S) "Change to FRAGO/Ops 0" (29 August 2006).
45. TF 3-06 "Op MEDUSA 26 August-6 September 2006"; (29 August 2006) RC (S) "Change to FRAGO/Ops 0" (27 August 2006).
46. Hetherington interview.
47. 23 Field Squadron War diary; Abthorpe interview.
48. Bradley and Maurer, *Lions of Kandahar*, pp. 133-136.
49. Ibid.
50. Lavoie interview.
51. Gary M. Bowman, "Operation Medusa: Coalition Operations in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan September 2006."
52. Abthorpe interview.
53. Gasparotto interview.
54. Telephone interview with Major Steve Macbeth (16 January 2011). Telephone interview with Major Andrew Lussier (5 October 2011).
55. Bradley and Maurer, *Lions of Kandahar*.
56. Letter T.J. Grant to COMCEFCOM, "Operation MEDUSA" (n/d).
57. Gasparotto interview.
58. ALLO Maj S.R. Rankin, "TIC-Operation MEDUSA Initial Assault on Pashmore [sic] 3 September 2006 Incident Lessons Report (ILR)" (6 September 2006). Interview with Warrant Officer Gordon Cullen and Master Corporal Seanan Houlihan (Ma'Sum Ghar, Afghanistan 2 August 2010).
59. Fraser interview.
60. Gasparotto interview; Lavoie interview; Fraser interview.
61. Rankin, "TIC-Operation MEDUSA Initial Assault on Pashmore [sic] 3 September 2006 Incident Lessons Report (ILR)."

62. Adam Day, "Operation Medusa: The Battle for Panjwayi Part One," *Legion Magazine* (1 September 2007).
63. Schreiber interview, Lipscey interview, Adams interview; Fraser interview.
64. Bernd Horn, *No Lack of Courage: Operation Medusa, Afghanistan* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2010); Lipscey interview; Lavoie interview.
65. Lipscey interview; Lavoie interview.
66. Sajjan interview.
67. Bradley, *Lions of Kandahar*, p. 148.
68. Lavoie interview.
69. Horn, *No lack of Courage*, pp. 63-66; Abthorpe interview; Cullen and Houlihan interview. There is a discrepancy in the sources as to when Charles Company stepped off: 0600, 0620, 0630 and even 0730 hours.
70. Lavoie interview.
71. Rankin, "TIC-Operation MEDUSA Initial Assault on Pashmore [sic] 3 September 2006 Incident Lessons Report (ILR)." See also attached 3 September 2006 story boards.
72. Cullen and Houlihan interview.
73. Bradley, *Lions of Kandahar*, p. 148.
74. Abthorpe interview.
75. Cullen and Houlihan interview.
76. Lipscey interview.
77. Cullen and Houlihan interview.
78. Freakley interview.
79. Lavoie interview.
80. TF Kandahar message log (4 September 2006). See also "Board of Inquiry Minutes of Proceedings: A-10A Friendly Fire Incident 4 September 2006, Panjwayi District, Afghanistan" convened 22 September 2006.
81. Lussier interview; TF Kandahar message log (4 September 2006).
82. 23 Field Squadron War Diary.
83. Lipscey interview.
84. Hillier, *A Soldier First*, p. 438.
85. Adams interview.
86. Adams interview.
87. Prohar interview.
88. This section is based on Bradley, *Lions of Kandahar*.
89. See Bradley, *Lions of Kandahar*.
90. Prohar interview. See also 1st Battalion 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) briefing, "SOTF-31 Panjwayi/ Pashmul Brief" (n/d).
91. Prohar interview.

92. Another estimate was 300. See Fraser interview (28 April 2014).
93. Prohar interview. See also 1st Battalion 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) briefing, "SOTF-31 Panjwayi/ Pashmul Brief" (n/d). See also Bradley, *Lions of Kandahar*.
94. Bradley, *Lions of Kandahar*. See also interview with 2-87 sniper Sgt Aaron Riley (Wardak Province, 27 February 2009).
95. Ibid.
96. Ibid.
97. Ibid.
98. Macbeth interview.
99. Lussier interview.
100. Fraser interview.
101. CTF Aegis Situation Update 1200L (7 September 2006).
102. CTF Aegis "Operation MEDUSA Situation Update: 2000" (4 September 2006).
103. Fraser interview; Lavoie interview.
104. CTF Aegis "Op MEDUSA Plan-04 September 2006" (4 September 2006).
105. CTF Aegis message 090400Z "Op MEDUSA.' Lavoie interview; Fraser interview (9 September 2006).
106. FRAGO MEDUSA 2 B 060906-1680-RCS (6 September 2006).
107. FRAGO MEDUSA 2 B 060906-1680-RCS; Fraser interview (6 September 2006).
108. Abthorpe interview.
109. Ibid. Lipcsey interview.
110. Gasparotto interview; 23 Field War Diary. See also Lipscey interview.
111. 23 Field War Diary.
112. Lavoie interview.
113. CTF Aegis Op MEDUSA 4-Hour Updates and 12-Hour SITREPS; Lavoie interview.
114. Bowman, "Operation MEDUSA."
115. CTF Aegis Op MEDUSA 4-Hour Updates and 12-Hour SITREPS.
116. Lussier interview.
117. Ibid.
118. Lavoie interview.
119. CTF Aegis Op MEDUSA 4-Hour Updates and 12-Hour SITREPS; Macbeth interview.
120. Freakley interview; Fraser interview.
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129. CTF Aegis Op MEDUSA 4-Hour Updates and 12-Hour SITREPS.
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143. Hetherington interview; see also Maloney, *Confronting the Chaos*.
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CONCLUSION

The first five years of the Canadian Army's involvement in Afghanistan were characterized by an initial and temporary commitment followed by a progressively deepened involvement on the strategic, operational, developmental, and capacity-building fronts as the situation evolved in Afghanistan.

Operation APOLLO, with the deployment of the 3 PPCLI Battle Group to KAF in the first half of 2002, was a relatively limited contribution to a larger American-led coalition operation designed to attack, disperse, and exploit the Al Qaeda organization after removing its Taliban 'shield'. Operation APOLLO's ground component provided crucial security in Kandahar Province for the plethora of forces conducting these operations and, as the situation developed, identified and mounted limited stabilization operations around KAF as part of this effort. In time, 3 PPCLI projected force out of KAF in conjunction with American forces in the process of putting Al Qaeda's conventional forces to flight in the Shah-i-Kot Valley, mounted a significant sensitive site exploitation mission to Tora Bora, provided a stable base of manoeuvre for American forces in the Khost region, and assisted in defining the operational situation in Zabul Province. These operations were integral to the larger American-led coalition effort in the country and, by effect, around the globe, yet at the same time served Canadian strategic purposes which revolved around demonstrative solidarity with the United States after the 9/11 attacks and the larger matter of identifying and reducing Al Qaeda's global threat to peace and stability. Though 3 PPCLI did not engage in significant combat operations at the battalion-level, the variety of its operations, when viewed as a whole, must be deemed successful as contributing to these strategic goals.

Canadian involvement in the higher aspects of the conflict, however, highlighted problems in the American approach to Afghanistan. The ambivalence at the highest levels in the American government regarding the post-Taliban, post-Al Qaeda situation in Afghanistan was identified early by Canadian officers but for the most part many believed that the European-led security assistance force and the international community-led reconstruction efforts would suffice. When those structures started to lose their momentum by 2003, Canada chose to re-commit forces to Afghanistan. The motives for this choice were more varied than those during the Operation APOLLO commitment but the strategic import of committing to the ISAF with a brigade headquarters and a battle group emerged over time. Simply put, Operation ATHENA, the Canadian-led ISAF stabilization mission in Kabul, deterred another destructive civil war in the capital and set the condition for the

emergence of a national government and then national elections. These steps, no matter how flawed, were essential if the international community was to invest in Afghanistan's reconstruction after twenty years of death and destruction.

There are already numerous arguments today about weaknesses and personality problems in the Afghan governance structure that emerged after 2003-2004 and the negative effects this system has had over time on the stability of the country. There is truth to some of these criticisms. However, the alternative was the withdrawal of coalition forces from the country and a repetition of the events of 1992-1993 followed by the re-assertion of jihadist-supported Taliban power in the country. No doubt Al Qaeda would have been invited back in and it is probable that the pre-2001 status quo would have been re-established. That was an unacceptable outcome for Canada.

The Canadian Army's involvement with Operation ATHENA in Kabul brought to the fore, yet again, the flaws in the international community's strategic approach to post-Taliban Afghan reconstruction. Measures were taken to rectify this state of affairs, based on the extensive experiences of a generation of Canadian soldiers who served in the Balkans throughout the 1990s. However, when those efforts were halted after Canada relinquished command of ISAF, the reconstruction situation threatened to slide into disarray yet again. Operation ARGUS and Operation ARCHER, the SAT-A, and the PRT in Kandahar Province, were central to turning this situation around. SAT-A, operating outside of the coalition frameworks, worked with the Afghans to craft the first real strategic plan for the country. At the same time, the decision to commit Canadians to a PRT demonstrated that Canada would 'walk the walk' in the provinces, not just 'talk the talk' in the capital. Accepting a PRT in the most volatile province in Afghanistan was a clear demonstration to the Afghans, the insurgents, the Europeans, and the Americans that Canada was deadly serious about Afghan recovery efforts.

Though there were always strategic coalition aspects of Canadian commitment decisions *vis-à-vis* the Americans and the Europeans, these should not be allowed to trump or otherwise overshadow how the deployed forces of Operations ATHENA, ARGUS, and ARCHER had a psychological as well as physical effect on the ground in the country. Those effects were only possible through the actions of highly professional Canadian soldiers at all levels, from the street all the way up the various coalition headquarters. The vertical and horizontal integration of the Canadian Army's efforts in Afghanistan by 2004-2005 was significantly improved and, as a result, Canada could exert influence in Kabul and in coalition circles in ways unimaginable before 2003, even back to the Cold War when it came to NATO.

Operations APOLLO and ATHENA, however, revealed that there was excessive micromanagement of tactical forces in Afghanistan by strategic command elements in Canada. These direct links, based in part on improved communications capabilities and

in part on modifications to traditional command levels, permitted political sensitivity to be transmitted with a greater frequency and a greater volume than in the past. This had a deleterious effect on operations in Kabul with consequent attenuation of Canada's ability to exert influence, particularly in 2004.

Similarly, the plodding implementation of the so-called '3D' approach, especially the nebulous divide between civil-military cooperation and development, plagued the Canadian effort right from the beginning. It was more through personalities than structure or policy that the Canadian departments were able to achieve any semblance of coordination by 2005.

Overall, the positive aspects of the Canadian Army's presence in Afghanistan during Operation ATHENA outweighed these negative issues. Canada's soldiers were instrumental in preventing not one but two *coup d'états* in 2003-2004. Working in partnership with the emergent Afghan National Army, the Canadian contingent protected the 2003 Constitutional Loya Jirga and played a significant role in national elections security in 2004. Throughout this period, the Canadian-led coalition mounted a campaign to disrupt terrorism in and around Kabul, which was superimposed on the other lines of operation. Canadian Army operations were successful in stabilizing Kabul so that other important activities could occur, and when those activities lost momentum, Canada's soldiers picked up the torch where they could.

When Canada committed a Canadian-led coalition headquarters and a battle group for operations alongside the PRT in Kandahar Province, no one in Ottawa seriously anticipated the escalating level of insurgent violence that CTF Aegis and TF Orion encountered in the first half of 2006. Undermanned and stretched thin, the TF Orion battle group encountered and absorbed the enemy's first major attacks west of Kandahar City while maintaining forces to counter the insurgency in the northern part of the province. If TF Orion had been unable to keep the lines of communications open to the west and north, British and Dutch forces would have been unable to deploy and conduct operations during this time, and NATO Stage III expansion would have become, perhaps, permanently delayed.

Unfortunately, a flawed coalition counter-narcotics policy and even more flawed implementation of that policy created more enemies in Helmand province than friends. Pakistan-based and supported insurgents rushed to assist this resistance. This in turn lead to TF Orion repeatedly propping up the British position in Helmand Province in addition to deploying forces to maintain the Canadian and Afghan positions in Kandahar Province. It is only through the psychological and physical resiliency of Canada's soldiers, be they from the TF Orion battle group, CTF Aegis brigade headquarters, or the National Support Element, that disaster was averted.

The combined effects of the Glyn Berry assassination in January 2006 and the stepped up insurgency militated against significant PRT reconstruction and development operations in Kandahar. This stalled out the larger ambitions of the Afghan National Development Strategy in Kandahar Province. The Canadian Army's forces in Afghanistan now had to find a way to have combat operations and development coexist in the same battle space, which in turn led to the first iterations of counterinsurgency operations and their effects on campaign planning. TF Orion and the PRT moved towards this goal but were unable to achieve it before rotating out in August 2006.

TF Orion was, however, able to progressively define the new dimensions of the problem in Kandahar in engagement after engagement with the growing insurgency from the spring to the summer of 2006. The turning points were the Battle of Pashmul in July and a subsequent operation in the same area in August. These operations demonstrated that the enemy was better organized, equipped, and motivated than some in Kabul and Ottawa wanted to believe, and that the insurgency's leaders were starting to shift to a more conventional stance than before. The loss of Canadian lives on 3 August 2006 forced the more skeptical observers to accept that the point of main effort in southern Afghanistan lay in Kandahar city and its western districts, not in the poppy fields of the Sangin Valley in Helmand province. The enemy was at the gates, as it were. At the same time, these battles convinced wavering provincial power brokers to remain either on the fence or to stay on side with the government – for the time being. By then, there were few illusions that the situation in southern Afghanistan was significantly different from what APOLLO and ATHENA forces encountered from 2002 to 2005. This was not counter-terrorism and it was no longer stabilization. It was a lethal and politically complex environment, which demanded a forceful response at that time.

That situation forced the follow-on battle group, TF 3-06, to move away from fledgling steps taken towards counterinsurgency and to conduct more conventional-style operations against an enemy that was digging in to defend Zharey district west of the city so it could use it as a springboard to invest the city. Suddenly, the Canadian Army in Afghanistan had to refocus on reducing positional defence and at the same time figure out, yet again, how to handle development, reconstruction, or improving governance. Afghan security force capacity building was thrown atop this already heaping burden. In effect, the focus remained on the near-conventional operations with the PRT in a supporting role and little effort on capacity building. Little could be done elsewhere in the province with the operational focus on a single district and its neighbor, which served as a logistics conduit for the enemy.

When all was said and done, Canadian forces, and their Afghan and American allies, dealt a series of body blows to the insurgency throughout the summer and fall of 2006.

It started with Operation ZAHAR and then the inadvertent contact with A Company 2 PPCLI at Ma'Sum Ghar in August, through 1 RCR battle group and Operation MEDUSA in September and October. Insurgent efforts vis-à-vis cutting off Kandahar City and convincing wavering power brokers to change sides were disrupted. The failure by the Dutch-led Regional Command (South) to properly consolidate during Operation BAAZ TSUKA and the refocusing of resources away from Kandahar and on Operation ACHILLES in Helmand in early 2007 forced the Canadian Army back onto the defensive in Kandahar Province. Canada could disrupt, but could not consolidate. TF 3-06 finally culminated with mounting casualties, broken vehicles, and severe personnel fatigue after a hard six-month fight.

The situation, as it stood in early 2007, was that the insurgency posed a serious and long-term challenge to the Afghan political system and reconstruction effort that Canada's soldiers mentored, assisted, and protected. Kandahar City was Afghanistan's 'second city'. It sat astride an age-old regional trade route between Asia and the Middle East. It was the religious centre of the south. The insurgents needed the city to meet their objectives. Canada and its Afghan and American allies were in a position to prevent them from achieving those objectives. There was not going to be any reinforcement of the Canadian position any time soon. The Europeans were uninterested and the Americans were mostly focused on their operations in Iraq. The Afghans were still recovering.

To make matters worse, there was a growing movement amongst opposition groups in Canada to pull out of the war. Every casualty, every mistake, perceived or real, now became fodder for these opponents when projected through the exaggerated but simplistic lens of the media and its associated commentators. This increased the pressure on Canada's soldiers as much as the insurgency did. If Canada's soldiers had failed to negotiate this complex terrain, they would have been forced to withdraw from Afghanistan with catastrophic effects on coalition operations in southern Afghanistan.

Those leading Canada's forces in Afghanistan had little choice. The insurgency had to be dealt with using whatever resources they had at hand or could bring to the fight in this new environment. If the battle for Kandahar Province failed, the entirety of Canada's five-year investment in Afghanistan's future would be jeopardized by the subsequent renewal of widespread fighting across the south, with a possible partition of the northern provinces and a slide back into the medieval dark years of 1993-2001. That scenario was too terrible to contemplate. Canadians set out once again to stabilize the situation so that development, reconstruction, and governance could move forward, this time under fire. That story is the subject of Volume II.

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APPENDIX A:

PAKISTAN AND THE INSURGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN TO 2006

During the course of the war in Afghanistan, the role played by the government of Pakistan and its security forces in supporting the insurgency was a highly sensitive topic. On one hand, Pakistan assisted the coalition to a certain extent by selectively capturing high-profile Al Qaeda leaders like Abu Zubaydah (2002) and Khalid Sheikh Mohammad (2003), which in turn had global effects on the Al Qaeda organization.[1] On the other hand, Pakistan also assisted with the creation of and provided substantial ongoing support for the Taliban movement. Pakistan and its security forces' role in the origins and support for the Taliban is undisputed.

In 1994, stoppages of trade along the regionally vital Highway 4 route from Quetta to Kandahar and beyond were frequent due to inter-faction competition in and around Kandahar. A concerted Pakistani covert policy initiative involving the ISI covert action organization and a religious militia funded by merchants from Quetta took over Spin Boldak from Hekmatyar's HiG organization, which was linked to narcotics producers in Helmand. Students from Pakistani madrassas preaching Wahhabism fed Mullah Omar's militia and, in time, the movement developed momentum in the chaotic Pashtun-dominated southern Afghanistan. Pakistan saw the Taliban as a means of gaining stability in Afghanistan and as a result, the Pakistani military provided technical and intelligence support as the Taliban battled what would become the Northern Alliance.[2]

From 2001 to 2006, Pakistan displayed multiple competing and even conflicting policies. The inability of Pakistan's leaders to reconcile this state of affairs by wilfully ignoring the problem or deflecting it in unhealthy directions seriously affected the subsequent course of events in Afghanistan and led to progressively increased violence against Canadian soldiers as they went about their duties. Again, there is little or no debate that this is the case both from Canadian primary sources and internal analysis but more importantly from the bulk of the secondary source literature produced since 2001 on the matter of Pakistan and the Taliban. Internal coalition sensitivities regarding a full-fledged discussion and acceptance of the facts were far outstripped by this increasingly credible body of work.

There was, for all intents and purposes, no organized insurgency in Afghanistan in the wake of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM by late 2002. There were Taliban stragglers, lost Al Qaeda trainers, and other low-level personnel affiliated with both organizations but there were few weapons, no central direction, and no reinforcement.

Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf declared in January 2002 that there would be no more support by Pakistan for radical groups.[3] The predominant regional crisis while Operation ENDURING FREEDOM conducted its sensitive site exploitation missions was a military standoff with nuclear dimensions between India and Pakistan. This crisis was initiated when a Pakistan supported terrorist group, Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), attacked the Kashmir Assembly in Srinagar on 1 October 2001, killing 35 people. This was followed by a JeM assault on the Indian Parliament itself on 13 December 2001. India conducted a general mobilization, Operation PARAKRAM, which lasted until October 2002. Pakistan responded with its own mobilization and the movement of two corps from the Pakistan-Afghan border east to the Kashmir-Pakistan border.[4] It is possible that Al Qaeda facilitated or otherwise encouraged this attack in order to draw off Pakistani security forces from the Durand Line so that Osama bin Laden could escape Tora Bora.

Canada kept a close eye on events in June 2002 in case they escalated to the point of nuclear weapons use, which appeared likely for several days. The Joint Operations Group prepared plans to evacuate Canadian nationals and Operation APOLLO naval forces in the Indian Ocean were directed away from the Pakistani coastline.[5] In Kandahar, LCol Pat Stogran requested and received NBCD protective equipment for the Canadian contingent in a matter of days.[6] In time the crisis waned. By the fall of 2002, it was history.

One of the effects of the Operation PARAKRAM mobilization was the decision by Pakistan to keep as many Taliban and other Pakistan-supported jihadis 'on tap,' as it were, for irregular operations against India in the event the crisis escalated.[7] By early 2003, the defeated Taliban was reorganizing in camps provided by the Pakistani security services and, in time, the Quetta Shura emerged as a leadership body in the south.[8] The formation of the Peshawar Shura quickly followed. Hekmatyar's HiG was already active in Kabul, and limited Al Qaeda terrorist operations were underway in the Afghan capital. 'Non-insurgent insurgents' in Kandahar laid mines for pay and the first IEDs were used against an American patrol in March 2003.[9] Between July and December 2003, American forces engaged small groups of armed insurgents in Nuristan, Paktika, and Spin Boldak, while major shoot outs took place in Shkin regularly. An Al Qaeda/Taliban raid killed two CIA paramilitaries in Paktia. Romanian forces were also ambushed south of KAF, while the UNAMA facility in Kandahar City was car bombed.[10] What changed?

According to David C. Isby, "The Afghanistan Taliban and their insurgent allies that have emerged from the Vortex are not the same pre-2001 organizations…the Afghanistan Taliban in Pakistan accelerated their cross-fertilization from other organizations…. This included participation in the rise of the Pakistan Taliban."[11] This was made easier when Musharraf publicly announced that he would end the use of Pakistan-supported terrorist groups in Kashmir as a method of de-escalation. Those groups, of which there are

nearly too many to list, came 'home' from Kashmir and, having common ideology with the Taliban and having the same ISI support and training networks, exchanged ideas and methods.[12] Clearly, this critical mass was a potential threat to the existing Pakistan system.

One of the Taliban's first moves was to announce to the world through fax and email that they still existed. A series of terrorist attacks against the Shi'as in Quetta in late 2003[13] followed to intimidate and challenge Pakistani governance in Baluchistan. In June, ethnic Hazara police trainers were murdered. In July, a Shi'a mosque was stormed, resulting in 55 deaths. On 2 March 2004, 44 Shi'as were killed in a Quetta mosque in another attack, which coincided with terrorist attacks against Shi'a targets in Karbala and Baghdad in Iraq on the same day. These attacks sent a message to the Pakistani government: the Sunni Wahhabist Taliban and its allies were capable of coordinated international action against any group if they were not accommodated.[14]

At the same time, the Pakistani security services had to accommodate the terrorist groups they created while appeasing the United States in the hunt for the 9/11 perpetrators. A third element was the ongoing and long standing strategic equation that Pakistan could not fight a strong Afghanistan and India at the same time in any future conflict. By supporting these fighting groups and encouraging them to focus their efforts on a weak Afghanistan, some of the notional pressure on Pakistan was relieved in the eyes of the Pakistani security apparatus. The idea that Pakistan kept the Taliban alive on life support as a hedge against American withdrawal from Afghanistan took root sometime in 2004 but as the United States and NATO discussed handing over security operations to ISAF, this was increasingly seen as the policy direction to take in 2005. Pakistani authorities believed that the United States was going to disengage and were, as ever, concerned about a power vacuum in Afghanistan that might lead to Iranian or, worse, Indian influence predominating.[15] This in part led to even more slackening of pressure on the Taliban.

Related to this was the territory of South Waziristan. Part of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (or FATA), areas like Waziristan were self-governing under agreements dating back to the creation of Pakistan in the 1940s. The only armed forces technically permitted in the FATA were the Frontier Corps, a border gendarmerie drawn from local people in the tribal areas. The retreating Taliban and Al Qaeda forces were ideologically attuned to the conservative hill peoples and in any event outgunned the Frontier Corps.

Prompted by the United States, the Pakistani Army mounted forays into South Waziristan throughout 2004 to roust an Al Qaeda safe haven in that area. This broke a long-standing agreement in which South Waziristan was self-policing and encouraged a backlash by a growing Pakistani Taliban movement. Increasingly mired in an insurgency that could expand and threaten the continued existence of the state, Pakistan negotiated a peace accord with the insurgent coalition there in 2004. Part of the deal was likely to back off on pressurizing the Quetta Taliban.

In the fall of 2005, the Pakistan government initiated a public crackdown on insurgent activities in Gilgit Agency (area of northern Kashmir), suppressed three indigenous extremist religious parties, and implemented policies designed to reduce outside monies and foreigners going to unregulated religious schools (madrassas).[16] This was mostly cosmetic; Gilgit Agency was in the north of the country, away from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas abutting Afghanistan which harboured Al Qaeda and the Taliban.

All of these factors gave the Quetta Shura not just breathing space but room to expand in 2004 and 2005. "Wandering Mullahs" arrived in rural areas of southern Afghanistan to proselytize and exploit local grievances, while cell-like networks were slowly established in Kandahar city. A build-up of arms in northern Kandahar districts and in Oruzgan province proceeded once routes through Zabul were finalized and connected to depots in Pakistan. "Night letters" proliferated to intimidate and make the Taliban appear omnipotent.[17] Merchants in Quetta were also canvassed for funds, but the real financial windfall for the Taliban and the other extremist groups was the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan. This permitted international monies to flow into Pakistan the form of unmonitored "relief aid" through fake non-governmental organizations and other entities. The Taliban also was able to extort "taxes" from relief workers who wanted to access stricken areas, or provide transport "security." The chaos also permitted the flow of international jihadis and "students" for Deobandist and Wahhabist madrassas in Pakistan to increase significantly. In this, Saudi Arabia pressured Pakistan to permit these "students" to come into the country to "help."[18]

Enough of the pieces were in place by late 2005 and early 2006 and, as mentioned in Chapters 9 and 10, the violence level in southern Afghanistan significantly increased throughout the spring and summer of 2006. This coincided with the deterioration of the security situation in North and South Waziristan over in Pakistan. A variety of groups, including Al Qaeda, HiG, and Haqqani Tribal Network, were using the rough terrain and a recalcitrant anti-Pakistan government population to conceal themselves. The Musharraf government forces clashed with local power brokers, which led to even more bad blood. An American analysis noted that "limited resources, rugged terrain, and uneven capability and support within the Pakistani military Frontier Corps and Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) limit Pakistan's ability to deliver quick results."[19] At the same time, Pakistan was confronted with a long-standing insurgency in Baluchistan and outside analysts wondered if "the Pakistani military is already overstretched along its western borders."[20]

The idea that the FATA and the North West Frontier Province were coalescing into what historian David C. Isby calls "The Vortex" was taking hold in American analytic circles by 2006. FATA and the North West Frontier Province were self-governing areas going back to the 1800s with carefully constructed political relationships with the central government

of Pakistan. These extremely conservative mountain communities had been the front line of the logistics support structure in the ISI-led war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s. They were also vital narcotics processing areas for the raw material acquired in Afghanistan and the end product was shipped south to Karachi or through eastern Iran. Indeed, there was intersection between resistance groups and the narcos in these areas going back decades. Now, with the remnants of Al Qaeda and the Taliban operating in these spaces, how to approach the problem in a systematic fashion was unclear.[21] The American response was to increase arms-length funding for the Frontier Corps and border security.[22]

Pakistani Army progress in these areas, particularly North and South Waziristan, was not encouraging. This was chalked up to tactical and technical issues[23] but some wondered how serious the Pakistani Army was about launching these kinds of operations in places they traditionally did not operate in, and for which the ISI was responsible for. Indeed, the Pakistani Army tended to use the ill-equipped, locally provided Frontier Corps, which proved less than enthusiastic in its operations against fellow Pashtuns.[24]

From the garbled reportage in the FATA during the summer of 2006, it appeared as though there was a new player emerging on the scene: the Pakistani Taliban. At some point, a number of Pakistani Pashtun groups in the FATA made common cause, likely with Al Qaeda encouragement,[25] and started to muscle in on established local conservative religious parties that had an uneasy relationship to the Afghanistan Taliban and was operating out of Quetta in Baluchistan. It was not clear whether this was Al Qaeda establishing a new 'franchise' or if it was the Taliban using Al Qaeda to reduce the influence of these local parties. There were warnings that all of these elements would coalesce and take over all of the agencies in FATA.[26]

All the while, the fighting in North Waziristan continued until the Pakistan government had enough. There was a cease-fire in June 2006, which did not bode well for the situation in Afghanistan: "Acceding to the terms offered by militants will undermine the Government of Pakistan's efforts to seal the border and restore law and order, but not negotiating at all could bolster the cause of the militants"[27] and thus push them into the emerging Pakistani Taliban camp that was developing. Either the Pakistan government backed off in North Waziristan and accommodated the Waziris, or the Waziris would join the other groups, which would endanger FATA and possibly Pakistan as a state. One observer warned that "without Government of Pakistan troops, North Waziristan could become increasingly Talibanized."[28]

In September 2006, Pakistan signed the final Waziristan Peace Accord in Miramshah. With the disengagement of Pakistani security forces from South Waziristan, the Taliban and others now fresh from the fight moved on to southern Afghanistan to join their fellows in Kandahar and Helmand, with the assistance of the Pakistani Army and the ISI.

(American SOF uncovered evidence of direct logistical support in September-October 2006 during operations in the Reg Desert in the shaping phases of Operation MEDUSA).[29] Clearly, the bulk of the insurgent forces engaged during Operation MEDUSA were not indigenous to Panjwayi and Zharey districts, nor were many of them even Afghan in nationality though distinguishing between Afghan Pashtuns and Pakistani Pashtuns was and remains no easy task in such an environment. We can only speculate what might have happened after 2006 had these forces not been available to reinforce the faltering insurgent effort in Kandahar.

By the end of 2006, Taliban influence in Pakistan was "spreading into new areas" in FATA.[30] Moreover, by this time, the number of attacks against coalition forces in Regional Command (East) in Afghanistan was noticeably higher.

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GLOSSARY

3eR22eR	3e Bataillon du Royal 22e Régiment
9/11	September 11th, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center in New York City, United States
ACAG	anti-coalition armed group
ACE	Allied Command Europe
ADM (Mat)	Assistant Deputy Manager (Materiel)
ADZ	Afghan Development Zone
AEF	Afghan Eradication Force
AEV	armoured engineer vehicle
AFNORTH	Allied Forces North Europe
AIA	Afghan Interim Administration – temporary Afghan government agreed to during the Bonn Agreement
American commands (CJTF-180, CJSOTF, CJCMOTF, CFC-A)	These American commands were grouped together in Afghanistan as Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. They are, respectively, the conventional forces; the special forces; the command associated with training and assisting Afghanistan and the overall headquarters of the American effort in Afghanistan
AMF	Afghan Militia Forces – Indigenous anti-Taliban Afghan forces whose loyalty remained to tribal chieftains
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANAP	Afghan National Auxiliary Police
ANDS	Afghan National Development Strategy
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
ANTC	Afghan National Training Center
AO	area of operations

AOR	area of responsibility
APC	armoured personnel carrier
AQ	Al Qaeda
ARRC	NATO's ACE Rapid Reaction Corps
ARTHUR	artillery hunting radar
ASIC	All Source Intelligence Centre
ATA	Afghan Transitional Administration – follow on government to the AIA prior to elections. The ATA took over from the AIA in 2003. President Hamid Karzai led both and they were the recognized government in 2003-2004.
AWACS	Airborne Warning and Control System
AWK	Ahmad Wali Karzai
BAF	Bagram Air Field
BCT	Brigade Combat Team
BMP	Boyevaya Mashina Pekhoty – Soviet mechanized infantry combat vehicle
BOI	Board of Inquiry
BSB	Brigade Support Battalion
CA	Civil Affair – American equivalent of CIMIC
CADPAT	Canadian disruptive pattern
CAF	Canadian Armed Forces
CANBAT	Canadian Battalion
CANCAP	Canadian Contractor Augmentation Programme
CANSOF	Canadian Special Operations Forces
CARE	Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere
CASEVAC	casualty evacuation

CCF	Commander's Contingency Fund – Canadian funding for civil-military cooperation activities
CDA	Canadian Defence Academy
CDC	Community Development Council
CDS, DCDS, and VCDS	Chief of the Defence Staff, Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff, Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff – prior to the creation of Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command in 2006, the DCDS was responsible for overseas operations.
CEFCOM	Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command
CENTCOM	Central Command – a U.S. command for the Middle East and southwest Asia
CER	Combat Engineer Regiment
CERP	Commander's Emergency Response Programme – American funding for civil affairs activities
CEXC	combined explosives exploitation cell – American counter-IED organization
CF	Canadian Forces (nomenclature CAF took effect in 2013)
CFC-A	Combined Forces Command Afghanistan – American command for Afghanistan
CFJSR	Canadian Forces Joint Signal Regiment
CFPSA	Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CIG	Confidence in Government
CIMIC	civil-military cooperation – handles liaison with the civilian leadership and the population in a given area
CinC	Commander-in-Chief
CINCNORTH	Commander-in-Chief Allied Forces North Europe
CIVPOL	civilian police – Canadian civilian police component of the PRT

CJCMOTF	Coalition Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force
CJSOTF	Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force
CJTF-76	Combined Joint Task Force 76 – American divisional headquarters for Afghanistan
CLJ	Constitutional Loya Jirga
CLP	combat logistics patrol
CMA	Central Military Area
CNS	Camp Nathan Smith – home of the Provincial Reconstruction Team
COMISAF	Commander International Security Assistance Force
CONOP	Contingency Operation
CONPLAN	Contingency Plan
CP	command post
CPEF	Central Poppy Eradication Force
CPEP	Central Poppy Eradication Programme
CSAR	Combat Search and Rescue
CSC	Civil Service Commission
CTF	combined task force
CTSO	Counterterrorism Special Operations – predecessor of Canadian Special Operations Command
DA	dissemination area
DART	Disaster Assistance Response Team
DCDS	Canadian Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff, responsible for overseas operations before CEFCOM was established in 2006
DCO	Deputy Commanding Officer
DComd	Deputy Commander
DDA	district development assemblies

DDR	disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration. DDR is the process for soldiers to return to civilian life and the cantonment of their weapons. It is also a verb: "to DDR." Heavy weapons cantonment is a subset of DDR but a separate programme.
DEVAD	Development Advisor
DFAIT	Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (the department name is correct for the time period)
DFID	Department for International Development – a British equivalent of CIDA
DIAG	disbandment of illegally armed groups
DND	Department of National Defence
DOCEX	document exploitation
DTF	detainee transfer facility
EAG	External Advisory Group
ECM	electronic countermeasures
EOD	explosive ordnance disposal
OEF	Operation ENDURING FREEDOM
ESF	NATO Elections Support Force
ETT	Embedded Training Team – Canadian and allied mentors to the Afghan National Army working for Task Force Phoenix
Eurocorps	European Corps – an intergovernmental army corps, which includes military personnel from nine nations. It is a force for the European Union and NATO; their headquarters is in Strasbourg, France.
EW	electronic warfare
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Agencies
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FLIR	forward looking infrared system
FOB	forward operating base

FOO/FAC	forward observation officer/forward air controller
FOSAF	Follow-On Security Assistance Force
FSB	Forward Support Battalion – American logistic organization at Kandahar Air Field
FSG	Forward Support Group – the Canadian logistics organization for Afghanistan
FST	Field Support Team – Canadian human intelligence team
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HEAT	high-explosive anti-tank (warhead)
HiG	Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin
HIMARS	high-mobility artillery rocket system
HLMV	heavy logistics vehicle wheeled
HOS	Head of State
HQ	headquarters
HUMINT	human intelligence
HVT	high-value target
HWC	heavy weapons cantonment
I-ANDS	Interim Afghan National Development Strategy
IC	international community
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross/Red Crescent
IDP	internally displaced persons (camp)
IED	improvised explosive device
IEDD	improvised explosive device disposal
IFOR	Implementation Force
ILOC	integrated lines of communications – logistics agreement between Canada and the United States

IMF	Investment Management Framework (defunct NATO strategy) or International Monetary Fund (organization)
IMP	individual meal pack
IO	international organization
IRF(L)	Immediate Reaction Force (Land) – a battalion on standby for global deployment within a given number of days
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISB	Intermediate Staging Base – a Canadian logistics element in Turkey
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
ISTAR	intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance
JCC	Joint Coordination Centre
JDAMS	joint direct attack munition
JDOC	Joint Defence Operations Centre – the headquarters at Kandahar Air Field coordinating the defence of the base
JeM	Jaish-e-Mohammed
JEMB	Joint Election Monitoring Board
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JOC	Joint Operations Centre
JOG	Joint Operations Group
JPCC	Joint Provincial Coordination Centre – located at the Governor's Palace
JSCC	Joint Security Coordination Centre
JSOC	Joint Special Operations Command
JTF-SWA	Joint Task Force South West Asia
JRT	Joint Regional Team – predecessor to the Provincial Reconstruction Team concept

JTAC	joint terminal air controller – the personnel, usually artillery, who handle the laser and satellite guidance systems to target precision munitions
JTF-A	Joint Task Force Afghanistan
K2	Karshi-Khanabad – one of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM's main air base
KAF	Kandahar Air Field – Bagram Air Field, KAF, K2 were Operation ENDURING FREEDOM's main air bases inside Afghanistan.
KAIA	Kabul Afghanistan International Airport
KBR	Kellogg, Brown & Root – American engineering, procurement, and construction company
KCP	Kabul City Police
KEP	key entry point
KFOR	Kosovo Force
KLE	key leader engagement
KMNB	ISAF's Kabul Multinational Brigade
KMTC	Kabul Military Training Centre
KSK	Kommando Spezialkräfte (Special Forces Command, Germany)
KUS	Kandahar Ulema Shura
LAV	light armoured vehicle
LFWA, LFCA	Land Force Western Area, Land Force Central Area (Canadian Army area headquarters in Canada)
LZ	Landing Zone
MACTP	Mine Awareness and Clearance Training Programme
Maz	Mazar-e Sharif
MCF	main contingency force
MEDEVAC	medical evacuation

MEWT	Mobile Electronic Warfare Team
MLVW	medium logistics vehicle wheeled
MMU	Multinational Medical Unit
MND	Minister of National Defence
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoI	Minister of Interior
MQ-1	MQ-1 Predator is an unmanned aerial vehicle
MQ-9	MQ-9 Reaper is an unmanned aerial vehicle
MRE	meal ready-to-eat
MRRD	Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
MSG	Ma'Sum Ghar
MTA	military technical agreement
MTAP	Military Training Assistance Programme
MVT	medium-value target
MWR	moral, welfare, and recreation
MYRM	NATO SFOR Multi-Year Road Map (or merm)
N2K	Nangarhar, Kunar, and Khost provinces
NAPCE	National Assembly and Provincial Council Elections
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCE	National Command Element
NCO	non-commissioned officer
NDHQ	National Defence Headquarters
NDS	National Directorate of Security
NGO	non-governmental organization
NORSOF	Norwegian Special Operations Forces

NSE	National Support Element
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
OCF	other coalition forces – type of American special operations forces
ODA	Operational Detachment Alpha – 12-man U.S. special forces team
ODB	Operational Detachment Bravo
OEF	Operation ENDURING FREEDOM – the U.S.-led coalition in Afghanistan
OGA	Other Government Agency
OGD	other government department – Canadian term for non-CF, non-DND personnel
OHR	Office of the High Representative
OMLT	Operational Mentor and Liaison Team – a NATO version of the Embedded Training Team
Op	Operation
OP	observation post
OPLAN	Operation Plan
OPSEC	Operations Security
ORM	Operational Road Map – the 'MYRM' for the IMF
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OSGAP	Office of the Secretary General for Afghanistan and Pakistan
PBSG	Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar
PBW	Patrol Base Wilson
PD	police district – the basic administrative-geographic organization of Kabul City in 2003-2004
PDC	Provincial Development Committee
POC	Provincial Operations Centre

POLAD	Political Advisor
PPCLI	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
PPIED	pressure-plated improvised explosive device
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Teams
PSYOPS	psychological operations – one of several information operations or IO activities designed to influence friends and enemies through messaging
PTS	Program Takhim-e Sohl – "Strengthening Through. Peace" amnesty programme
PWGSC	Public Works and Government Services Canada
QIP	quick impact project
QRF	quick reaction force
RAF	Royal Air Force
RALC	Régiment d'artillerie légère du Canada
RBC	Régiment blindé du Canada
RC (South)	Regional Command (South)
RCD	The Royal Canadian Dragoons
RCHA	Royal Canadian Horse Artillery
RCIED	radio-controlled improvised explosive device
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RCP	route clearance package
RCR	The Royal Canadian Regiment
RDZ	Regional Development Zone
REMBAS	remotely monitored battle field sensor system
RGC	Régiment du génie de combat (Eng – CER)
RIP	relief in place

RMC	Royal Military College
ROE	rule of engagement
Roto	rotation
ROWPU	reverse osmosis water purification unit
ROZ	restricted operating zone – an area where aircraft are not permitted to fly into
RPG	rocket-propelled grenade
RWS	remote weapon system
SA	situational awareness
SACEUR	NATO's Supreme Commander Europe
SAGEM	Société d'Applications Générales de l'Électricité et de la Mécanique (brand name)
SAS	Special Air Service
SAT-A	Strategic Advisory Team Afghanistan
SBS	Special Boat Service
SEAL	Sea, Air, and Land – U.S. Navy's principal special operations force and a part of the Naval Special Warfare Command and United States Special Operations Command
SFOR	Stabilization Force – NATO-led force in Bosnia
SFGA	Special Forces Group (Airborne)
SHIRBRIG	UN Standby High-Readiness Brigade
SIGINT	Signals Intelligence
SLOC	strategic lines of communications – logistics path back to Canada
SNC	Surveyer Nenniger & Chênevert, Inc. (now SNC-Lavalin, a Canadian engineering firm)
SOAR	Special Operations Aviation Regiment
SOF	Special Operations Forces

SOFT	Special Operations Task Force
SQFT	Secteur du Québec de la Force terrestre (French for Land Force Québec Area LFQA)
SRT	Strategic Reconnaissance Team (or strategic recce)
SSE	sensitive site exploitation
SSR	security sector reform
SST	"Shit Sucker Trucks"
SVBIED	suicide vehicle-born improvised explosive device
TAA	tactical assembly area
TAC	tactical air control
TCCC	Tactical Combat Casualty Care
tEOD	Telerob explosive ordnance device and observation robot
TET	Tactical Exploitation Team
TF	task force
TFA	Task Force Afghanistan
TFK	Task Force Kabul or Task Force Kandahar
TIC	Troops in Contact
TK Road	Tarinkot road
TOW	tube-launched optically-tracked, wire-guided (launchers)
TUAV	tactical unmanned aerial vehicle
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle
UBL	Usama bin Laden
UK	United Kingdom
UMS	unit medical station

UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan
UNDOF	United Nations Disengagement Observer Force
UNGOMAP	United Nations Good Offices Mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan
UNMACA	United Nations Mine Action Centre Afghanistan
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
UNSC	United Nation Security Council
U.S.	United States
USAID	United Stated Agency for International Development
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USNORTHCOM	United States Northern Command
UTN	Ummah Tameer-e-Nau – a Pakistani 'humanitarian' non-governmental organization
UXO	unexploded ordnance
VIP	very important person
VOR	vehicle off road
VRE	Voter Registration and Elections – operations supporting elections including registration, polling, ballot-counting and the protection thereof to ensure transparency, impartiality, and legitimacy
WMD	weapons of mass destruction

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Dr. Sean M. Maloney

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THE CANADIAN ARMY IN AFGHANISTAN

VOLUME II, PART 1: COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN KANDAHAR

Sean M. Maloney, PhD

CANADIAN ARMY ARMÉE CANADIENNE

THE CANADIAN ARMY IN AFGHANISTAN

VOLUME II, PART 1: COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN KANDAHAR

Sean M. Maloney, PhD

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A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

During the review process for Volume I, concerns were raised about the ratio of pages in the narrative afforded to one rotation or another and that the number of pages afforded to rotations or activities should reflect some form of "measurement of importance." This reasoning should not apply to either Volumes I or II.

As you will see, Volume II differs from Volume I in that the focus of Canadian Army operations from 2007 to 2009 was almost solely on Kandahar Province with occasional forays into Helmand Province. In the 2001–2006 period, the Canadian Army was in Kandahar, then in Kabul, then both and finally in Kandahar and Helmand Provinces. After 2009, Canadian efforts were focused even further on two districts in Kandahar Province, and by 2011, a single district. Depicting this decline from strategic- and operational-level involvement to tactical-level engagement over the course of five years is no easy task. At some points in the narrative, there are more "moving parts" than at others.

For example, the concurrent operations of a Canadian-led Regional Command (South) headquarters and Joint Task Force Afghanistan in 2008 produced more Canadian activity than, say, a JTF Afghanistan dealing solely with Panjwayi and Dand Districts in 2011. Similarly, the types of operational-level issues the Canadian Army were involved in during 2007-2009 ceased by 2010 with the American influx of several brigades into the province. This accounts for the disproportionate attention paid in space to certain time frames. This disproportion should in no way be taken as a slight on any organization or unit and is solely a product of narrative realities.

The story of the Canadian Army in Afghanistan is very different from the traditional Second World War narrative, which tends to be battle-focused and linear. A battle-focused history of the Canadian Army in Afghanistan would be heavily weighted toward describing the actions of some battle groups and to some extent the Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (OMLT). This type of narrative would produce a distorted depiction of what the Canadian Army did in Afghanistan. As the Canadian Army was engaged in a counter-insurgency war involving a variety of capacity-building and other activities, this history cannot be battle group centric. As JTF Afghanistan evolved, it eventually included the battle group, the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), the OMLT, the Police OMLT, the Air Wing, and the National Support Element (NSE). The OMLT grew to mentor an Afghan army brigade, while the PRT's infantry company, civil-military cooperation and psychological operations teams fused into specialized deployable stabilization companies,

for example. The Air Wing's tactical helicopter and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) organizations were intimately and inextricably part of Army operations in the districts. Consequently, this volume's examination of the 2007–2009 period must affect a balance between TF Kandahar's constituent elements.

Another difference between the Afghan conflict and the participation of the Canadian Army in previous wars was the substantial involvement of army formations, units and their leaders with national, provincial and district-level domestic politics in Kandahar Province. This was historically unprecedented but given the fact that this was a counterinsurgency war, wholly understandable. Kandahari provincial power politics were intricate and the Canadian Army started off knowing little about how they worked. Over time, its understanding evolved as much as it could, given the circumstances. The intersection of those political realities and their effects on Canadian Army operations and activities was profound. As we move through the narrative, it is crucial for the reader to understand that, as the war progressed, Canadians were up against these entities almost as much as they were up against the insurgents. In time, recognition that there were serious and irreconcilable problems with the provincial government in Kandahar led to the withdrawal of Canadian forces from Kandahar. Consequently, to fully appreciate the Canadian Army's endgame in the south in 2011, it is necessary to understand the nature of this environment. Again, this state of affairs has no parallel in the Canadian Army's Second World War or Korean War history, so some patience is required on the part of the reader, so that they may fully comprehend the complexity of what was happening during this period.

It is tempting and would be far easier to produce battle history, laud our valour and tactical accomplishments on the battlefield, search for and identify a new Vimy or Normandy, be done with it and move on having institutionally wrapped ourselves in new glory. That would not be true to the Canadian Army's experience in Afghanistan and would do a disservice to the bulk of the Army personnel who were involved in activities outside of those battles in the districts west of Kandahar City. Yes, there was valour. Yes, combat was a daily fact of life, particularly to the Canadian men and women operating from isolated combat outposts, manoeuvring in the grape fields or working alongside the Afghan police and army. Balance is necessary and Volume II strives for that ideal.

A Note on Special Operations Forces

Initially, there was to be a separate volume dealing with Canadian SOF in Afghanistan written by a member of Canadian Special Operations Forces Command. In many cases, the Canadian SOF story is independent of the Canadian Army's story, and in some cases, it is not. At this time, it appears as though the Canadian Army in Afghanistan (in this case

TF Kandahar and its subordinate units) had closer and more frequent contact with allied SOF in Kandahar. In most cases, these allies were more receptive to their actions being depicted in history than Canadian SOF was. As a result, their activity appears to be excised from history in the early chapters of this volume. I can assure you that Canadian SOF operations in southern Afghanistan and elsewhere were a crucial and fascinating component of the war but unfortunately, their earlier actions cannot be depicted in any relevant detail herein. It remains an irony that the leadership and personnel of some of the allied SOF organizations confided with the author so that the context of their activities could be understood in relation to Canadian operations and they had no issue with my depiction of what they were doing within operational security limitations. The exceptions were certain aspects of the operations of Canadian Special Operations Task Force 58, which the author was permitted to depict.

INTRODUCTION

The decision to commit the Canadian Army to southern Afghanistan and the subsequent series of battles west of Kandahar City in the summer and fall of 2006 established a situation whereby the insurgency's momentum was dissipated by early 2007. By this time the insurgency's southern leadership in Quetta ascertained that there were two main fronts in the south: Helmand and Kandahar, with supporting efforts in Oruzgan and Zabol Provinces. British operations in Helmand aggravated the population and their power brokers to the extent that the province exhibited levels of anti-government violence almost on par with Kandahar. That said, the collapse of Kandahar would have resulted in a collapse of the coalition effort in southern Afghanistan. Operations in the more mountainous Oruzgan and Zabol Provinces were supportive in nature: they were transit points to get resources into Helmand and Kandahar using the northern routes, or they were used to shift insurgent forces as required. In effect, the Quetta leadership could prod either Helmand, Kandahar, or both to elicit a response from ISAF. In any event, it was crucial for ISAF to maintain the momentum gained by the events of late 2006.

In past conflicts, Kandahar City had been seized by what theorists in the West called *focoism*, a term that emerged in Latin American revolutionary thinking in the 1960s. Foco Theory suggests that a relatively small group of mobile, agile, well-armed, well-organized (and sometimes well-funded) revolutionaries develop physical and psychological momentum as they victoriously move toward the capital city:

> A small revolutionary force, by using violence, can mobilize popular support much more quickly; instead of political mobilization leading eventually to violence, violence transforms the political situation. Awakened and excited by foco attacks, angered and encouraged by the brutality and ineptitude of the government response, alienated if the government seeks help from a foreign power, people will be mobilized for revolution in a process in which violence is itself a catalyst.[1]

This psychological momentum generates social momentum as more and more people come off the fence or change sides to flock to the apparently victorious cause and its leaders. The combination of physical and social momentum results in the overthrow of the capital from inside, perhaps without direct engagement of the security forces in a destructive Götterdämmerung-like decisive battle. It is unlikely that those who took Kandahar City

in the past used this terminology or specific theoretical basis for their actions. They likely knew what worked within the cultural construct of Kandahar power politics and applied resources to achieve their aims.

It is not completely clear what happened in Kandahar with the collapse of the Najibullah regime in 1992. One view is that control of the city by Communist forces basically disintegrated and was replaced with multiple small insurgent groups who were unable to assert any form of unified control—or were uninterested in doing so.[2] In another view, Mullah Naqib and the Alikozais co-opted the Communist leadership in Kandahar after 1989 and worked with them to eject several groups of unwelcome Mujahideen. During this process, a key Barakzai Mujahideen leader was assassinated. This led to a foco-like group of Barakzais led by Gul Agha Sherzai moving on the city and staging a campaign of psychological pressure and deception in 1992–1993. The purpose of this campaign was to convince the now ex-Communist governor (who happened to be Barakzai) to change sides and work with them in order to edge out the Alikozais and other Mujahideen groups for commercial benefits.[3]

The Taliban movement was itself *foco*-like. This initially small group of religious students supported by Quetta merchants and elements from the Pakistani security services developed enough momentum, as they moved north along Highway 4 from Spin Boldak, to convince the Alikozai leader, Mullah Naqib from Arghandab, to assist with the overthrow of Gul Agha Sherzai's Barakzais in 1994. From Kandahar City, the Taliban moved foco-like from victory to victory throughout Afghanistan and even allied itself with Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin (HiG) organization, which initially opposed them. In time, the momentum dissipated and the lines stabilized into a more traditional civil war in northern Afghanistan against the Northern Alliance.[4]

Similarly, in 2001, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM deposited American SOF to work with both the Popalzai and Barakzai power brokers to do the same thing; operations which convinced Alikozai leader Mullah Naqib to change sides and assist with taking Kandahar City away from the Taliban.[5] In all of these cases, one should note that Kandahar City was never really sacked or subjected to the same sort of highly destructive bombardment that Kabul was. It was important for all players that business as usual could continue under such circumstances.

It is not surprising that the Taliban insurgency continued its attempts to take Kandahar City in similar fashion. These efforts consisted of building a ring of supporting networks in outlying districts, using those support networks to take control of "strong point" districts on key routes to and from the city, and then destabilize districts directly adjacent to the city in order to generate collapse of the central government. And, when thwarted by coalition operations as well as Naqib's intransigence, the insurgency was forced to adapt its methods.

By late 2007, the insurgency's attempts to regain the initiative once again failed, specifically in Arghandab District. From 2007 to 2009, the insurgency adapted as best it could but the disruption caused by coalition efforts almost forced it to relent by early 2010.

The bogged-down nature of the war on the "second front" unfortunately reinvigorated the insurgency into adopting a particularly hideous methodology difficult to counter. That "second front" was the development and capacity-building efforts undertaken by ISAF and the rest of the so-called international community. Opportunism by Afghan power brokers and the negative relationship between that opportunism and government legitimacy caused severe damage to the counter-insurgency effort as a whole. The weak attempts to stabilize Afghanistan enshrined by the Bonn Agreement meant that the structures necessary to generate strong governance failed to materialize in southern Afghanistan. Power broker opportunism at the provincial and even district levels also undermined the Canadian-mentored Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS).

Thus, by 2007, Canada was almost starting over in Kandahar, half a decade after the Bonn Agreement. Worse, Canada was starting over with a civilian structure that was not optimized in terms of people, organization or purpose to deal with the immense challenges that the situation dictated. As a result, the Canadian Army in the form of Joint Task Force Afghanistan was forced to take the lead in the security, governance, development and reconstruction lines of operations. And in many cases, this response was ad hoc and involved creating structures, organizations and operational approaches that had no doctrinal or experiential basis in what the Canadian Army had been doing for the past 50 years. In doing so, several Canadian bureaucratic power brokers were offended by TF Kandahar's approach, which in turn led to decreased unity in the Canadian effort in southern Afghanistan.

The Canadian military leadership in southern Afghanistan was also hampered by an increasingly incoherent Canadian strategic approach in Kabul. This resulted in the removal of key influence mechanisms and reduced Canadian influence to the extent that it was difficult to maintain a partnered approach with the Afghan government. Canada was forced to fall back on province-level influence which itself became increasingly problematic.

The fact that the Canadian Army was able to adapt to all of these circumstances in such a harsh operational and political environment, and then thwart enemy designs in southern Afghanistan, is, in retrospect, breathtaking.

It never looked pretty, and it certainly never ever looked exact. The ultimate effect of the Canadian Army effort in Kandahar from 2007 to 2009 was to act as an operational-level holding action until the American administrations could reprioritize their strategic efforts to focus on Afghanistan and Pakistan. When that took place in 2009–2010, pressure was gradually relieved on the Canadian effort and this set the stage for Canada's withdrawal from the south after six years of war. It must be emphasized, however, that this state of

affairs was not an intentional Canadian plan in 2007 by any means. It evolved from the incremental coalition approach to the situation in Afghanistan between 2007 and 2009. Canadians did what they thought was best at the time to keep the enemy disrupted while governance and development efforts continued. There was no real hope for decisive American reinforcement prior to mid- to late-2009.

The Canadian Army in Afghanistan, Volume II is the story of those efforts. The central mechanism was JTF Afghanistan and its various units and sub-units. Indeed, the expansion of JTF Afghanistan is a story unto itself. What started as a battle group, a PRT, a small OMLT, and an NSE in 2007, moved to an organization that eventually encompassed a battle group, an OMLT mentoring an Afghan army brigade and its units, a PRT deeply involved in governance and policing, an NSE, and an entire Air Wing with helicopters and UAVs. As well, this formation had tactical control of American battalions and drew upon American airpower as required. At the same time, Canadian command of the superior NATO ISAF Headquarters, Regional Command (South) in 2008, was also significant. Having a Canadian-led multinational division available with its resources was something that had not occurred since 2001 in Bosnia during the NATO Stabilization Force days.

The TF Kandahar and Regional Command (South) headquarters rotations were on different nine-month rotations, but the subordinate units were on a six-month rotation. As a result, Volume II, Part 1 is chronologically structured to depict the actions and activities of TF Kandahar and the Canadian-led Regional Command (South) from 2007 to 2009. Each chapter covers approximately six months of activity and generally attempts to centre on the rotational rhythm of the Canadian task force units, given that they produced the bulk of the operational and tactical activities on the ground. Every effort has been made to seamlessly and succinctly provide the higher military and Afghan political context.

ENDNOTES

1. John Shy and Thomas W. Collier, "Revolutionary War," *The Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, Peter Paret, Ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 850.
2. Ahmed Rashid visited the area in 1993 and that is what he reports in *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale Nota Bene Publications, 2001), Ch. 1.
3. See Peter Tomsen, *The Wars of Afghanistan* (New York: Public Affairs, 2013), pp. 330–334.
4. Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon, Afghanistan 1994–1997* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 68-69; Neamatollah Nojumi, *The Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), Ch. 13; Roy Gutman, *How We Missed the Story* (Dulles VA: Potomac Books, 2008), Ch. 4.
5. Interview with Colonel Don Bolduc (Carlisle, 26 May 2009). Gul Agha Sherzai, then Governor of Kandahar and his brother Raziq related their version of the events of 2001–2002 to the author in March 2003.

CHAPTER ONE

SETTLING IN:

FEBRUARY–JULY 2007

Canadian Army operations in southern Afghanistan during the first half of 2007 settled into a pattern that was remarkably different from 2006 but presaged activities over the next five years. The insurgency had been mauled by the coalition's efforts in the summer and fall of 2006, and its leaders were forced to modify their approach to the conflict. The Kandahar political, social and economic landscape, always in a state of flux, responded voraciously to the sudden availability of development and other monies on a scale not previously seen. The JTF Afghanistan's force structure expanded to incorporate new capabilities; it evolved as the Army adapted to the new environment. Additionally, TF Kandahar, its leadership, and its units were subjected to five forces as they struggled to grip the problems of Kandahar Province: ISAF headquarters; Regional Command (South) headquarters; Canadian Expeditionary Force Command (CEFCOM); the Canadian government; and the insurgency. It was during 2007 that these five forces started to pull the command in multiple and, in many cases, opposing directions. That state of affairs was exacerbated during the rest of the Army's stay in Afghanistan, but for the time being, Canada was confronted with the mechanics of implementing development and reconstruction in Kandahar Province while under fire. It was crucial that the successes of 2006 not be thrown away and the new Canadian units coming into theatre set out to ensure that did not happen. Others attempted to formulate and implement a new and better strategic approach to the problem. Combined Task Force Aegis, TF Orion and the 1 RCR battle group identified and disrupted enemy designs on Kandahar Province. The new JTF Afghanistan had to maintain that disruptive effect while working to define the Afghan Development Zone (ADZ) in the province through capacity-building and development aid—and respond to pressures from Kabul to expand the zone itself.

The Higher Direction of the War into 2007

There was a respite in December 2006–January 2007 as coalition planners at a number of levels sought to divine the effects of Operations MEDUSA and BAAZ TSUKA on the situation in Kandahar Province. The main issue that dogged Canadians at TF Kandahar was the command turbulence in ISAF. Lt.-Gen. David Richards handed off to American Lt.-Gen. Dan McNeill in February 2007, while command of Regional Command (South) changed from the Dutch under Maj.-Gen. Ton van Loon to the British under

Maj.-Gen. Jacko Page in May. Two higher headquarters commanded by strong personalities from three different countries over the course of four months was sub-optimal for long-term planning, let alone medium-term implementation of plans at the provincial level. The saving grace for Canada was relative command continuity within TF Kandahar. There was one Canadian commander in Afghanistan for this entire period, BGen Tim Grant. The incoming 2nd Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment (2 RCR) Battle Group under LCol Rob Walker was scheduled to deploy in February while the PRT came under the command of LCol Bob Chamberlain, who was emplaced at Camp Nathan Smith for a year-long tour. It should be noted here that, in late 2006, CEFCOM in Ottawa was directed by LGen Mike Gauthier and tasked to develop a long-term Canadian campaign plan to replace the CTF Aegis plan. The CEFCOM planners kept trying to adjust their plans to what ISAF HQ and Regional Command (South) thought they were doing, but it would take time to come up with a full-blown replacement for the CTF Aegis campaign plan.[1] What did this mean for Canadian commanders on the ground? The ADZ strategy, championed by Richards and so assiduously adhered to in summer and fall 2006, was suddenly in limbo when McNeill took over in February 2007. From then until June, there was no express direction from ISAF HQ to continue with ADZs, yet, under van Loon, Regional Command (South) continued with the construct, at least until the spring when he left. For the most part, the Canadians in Afghanistan worked from the original CTF Aegis Campaign Plan in the absence of any clear direction from either ISAF HQ or Regional Command (South).[2]

Indeed, by the summer, TF Kandahar seemed to be getting more verbal direction from Regional Command (South) than written direction. Regional Command (South) was working on a baseline operation plan called SATYR PERSEUS, the NATO headquarters in Brunssum was revising its Operation Plan 30302, but there was still nothing coherent established from January to August 2007. There was a single page letter of intent from McNeill's headquarters and little else. By March, ISAF headquarters seemed to move away from the ADZ strategy in a document called NOW RUZ ("New Year"), but even then, it was not effective guidance at the provincial level.[3]

In the absence of anything specific coming out of ISAF HQ and given the changed nature of the situation in Kandahar vis-à-vis the 2006 CTF Aegis campaign plan, BGen Grant issued his "Commander's Direction: Operational Plan for Winter 2007" in January 2007. The enemy, the planners agreed, would continue with the direction taken in 2006 but there would be an "increase in severity as insurgents capitalize on perceived operational gains." They would "continue to expand their influence at the district and provincial level" and "undermine the authority of the Government of Afghanistan and ISAF through intimidation, violence, and effective local-level information operations."[4]

To combat this, TF Kandahar wanted to "solidify its gains by building upon the success of previous operations and must continue to encourage support of the Afghan people for their government." Crucially, "the importance of Kandahar City has been evident throughout history and most recently as a wellspring of the Taliban." Canadian operations had to focus on establishing "a better understanding of Kandahar Province, in particular Kandahar City, and the mechanisms to positively influence and promote the Government of Afghanistan as represented by the Governor of Kandahar Province."

The primary mechanism to do this was through the ADZ approach, detailed in the previous volume. The TF Kandahar planners believed that the ADZ was the best way to "achieve tangible improvements for the population." It would remain centred on Kandahar City and everything possible was to be done to "establish freedom of movement along Highway 1 and Highway 4 within boundaries."

Additionally, Commander CEFCOM directed TF Kandahar to strengthen the connections between several critical components in this effort. First, battle group, PRT, and OMLT operations had to become better coordinated. Second, the Afghan provincial- and national-level connections in all areas had to be improved. Third, Commander CEFCOM was under pressure to unleash the power of the Canadian "whole of government" approach to facilitate both of these collections of connections, so better intergovernmental cooperation was expected.

For the early part of 2007, then, TF Kandahar saw the campaign plan slightly differently than CTF Aegis had, and, unlike the CTF Aegis plan, TF Kandahar had an end date: 2009. The three lines of operation remained security, governance and development and infrastructure. Rather than have all three moving along abreast, however, the planners believed that the effort was weighted toward shaping through security, with the decisive factor being governance, and development sustaining the effort over time. The ADZ was integrated into this thinking and what went on within it became a measurement of effectiveness of sorts:

Security operations objectives

Maintain sufficient forces in Zharey-Panjwayi while we firmly establish an ANA presence partnered with the OMLT to retain key terrain in the Pashmul region (Route Summit) and secure the key corridor into Kandahar City along Highway 1…we will build Afghan National Auxiliary Police capacity in local villages and make elders responsible for maintaining security in their own areas.

Objectives in the governance sphere

We will reinforce the mentoring of the Government of Kandahar through the KPRT…. We must isolate the population from competing illicit authorities….. Aggressive IO to undermine and discredit these competitors while reinforcing Government of Kandahar authority is key to ensuring that the legitimate Government of Kandahar is seen to offer a more appealing system of governance than the Taliban or other illicit groups.

Development objectives

Immediate developmental effects are required to promote the notion that [Afghan government] authorities can offer a brighter future along with progress that is perceptible to the people of Kandahar Province…. However, long-term projects aimed at long-term stability will not be compromised for short-term Information Operations victories through immediate impact operations.

A crucial difference in the 2007 campaign plan was the addition of "Mission Credibility" as a factor:

The critical vulnerability of JTF Afghanistan is the will of the Canadian people….Casualties among Canadians is the key parameter, being a sufficient factor in determining the net value of the mission to Canadians. Afghan civilian and NATO casualties also have [an] effect. The potential negative effects of perceived mistreatment of detainees are also noted as a factor.[5]

While TF Kandahar implemented its Winter Campaign in February–March 2007, Regional Command (South) focused on two items. The first was to come up with a means to extricate itself psychologically from Zharey District and look at a broader regional command picture. The decision was made between JTF Afghanistan and Regional Command (South) that operations in the Zharey-Panjwayi area would be dubbed "Operation BAAZ TSUKA Phase Three Charlie" with reference to the stability portion of the BAAZ TSUKA plan. Whatever went on in those districts was given this unwieldy moniker. Regional Command (South) under van Loon then became beguiled with Operation ACHILLES over in Helmand. The reasons for this included the need for a clear information operations success or the need to prop up a potential British policy disaster in Helmand Province. Or it could have been the belief that there was linkage between what the Taliban leadership was doing in Kandahar Province, what they were now doing in Helmand Province, and the possibility that sophisticated leadership targeting could have an impact in both provinces. The details of Canadian involvement in Operation ACHILLES, which was more peripheral and supportive in nature, are examined later on. What is important about ACHILLES in one respect was the integration of leadership targeting into the campaign as a whole.

What van Loon and crew wanted to do in Operation BAAZ TSUKA in December 2006, they now could do with Operation ACHILLES. Van Loon wanted to, once again, drive a wedge between what Regional Command (South) believed were "Tier I" and "Tier II" Taliban: the first being hard-core dedicated jihadists and the latter local hired guns with little or no ideology. ISAF was also looking for some form of decisive action for public consumption to demonstrate success to constituent populations. Operation ACHILLES was, according to some planners, oversold and expectations rose, which in turn drew more scarce resources away from the efforts in Kandahar Province.[6]

Ground manoeuvre during Operation ACHILLES essentially involved shaping operations for special operations forces' enemy leadership targeting on a regional scale. Mullah Dadullah Lang, the Quetta Shura's primary commander for southern Afghanistan, emerged in the jihadist media and then in the Western media in late 2006 as the Erwin Rommel of the Taliban: if one can envision an Erwin Rommel that also slit captured informants' throats in living colour for DVD distribution in Kandahar City. Operation ACHILLES, with its conventional force manoeuvres in Helmand, created significant pressure on the Taliban leadership. Those efforts eventually forced Mullah Dadullah Lang into the open where he was made to dance to the tune of repeated HIMARS missile attacks and was then corralled and killed by TF 42's Special Boat Squadron operators sometime on the night of 12 May 2007.[7]

A number of issues pertinent to Canada's position in the south fell out of Operation ACHILLES. First, there was the accelerating debate over which province was more important to the coalition effort, which should get scarce resources, and in what order. Second, Operation ACHILLES used the revitalization of the Kajaki Dam as a key development objective in its planning documents. This contributed, to some extent, to the parallel interest that emerged in the Dahla Dam, a 1950s-era facility that was located in lower Shah Wali Kot District in Kandahar. Interest in the Dahla Dam gained momentum in Canadian policy circles in spring 2007. Third, the elimination of Mullah Dadullah Lang had spin-off effects on the security situation in Kandahar which, in turn, had inadvertent negative effects on reconstruction and development in two areas. The decision by Governor Asadullah Khalid to put on public display the corpse of the slain enemy commander triggered a kidnapping campaign against aid workers. This resulted in severe degradation in development operations. Mullah Dadullah Lang's killing also removed the most vocal member of the Quetta Shura when it came to near-conventional operations of the style conducted in 2006 and made way for those who were inclined toward more complex asymmetric solutions to the insurgency's operational and tactical problems.

The situation also evolved significantly at the Kabul level. Col Mike Capstick and the staff of the Strategic Advisory Team-Afghanistan (SAT-A) could bask in the fact that their efforts alongside their Afghan counterparts produced a coherent reconstruction strategy

for the country that was acceptable to everyone except the insurgents. In January 2007, the final draft of the strategic work plan of the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) was delivered.[8] The ANDS had a direct bearing on Canadian operations in Kandahar. Recall that the gross linkages between the federal government in Kabul with the provinces for reconstruction and development generally and temporarily focused on the role of the PRT in assisting the rural development ministry and the provincial governors. As seen in Volume I, the fighting throughout 2006 disrupted the specific means by which aid was to be dispersed to the population and the ISAF ADZ strategy was geared to provide a security framework to facilitate this.

The ANDS, now in its 2007 form, provided a slightly more coherent model to link all elements together. The Governor, supported by a Provincial Development Committee Secretariat and the Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development, would have a Provincial Development Committee with several working groups, that in turn would draw on the PRT, District Development Assemblies and Community Development Councils, and non-governmental organization donors. This was the new "spout" that was supposed to disperse a portion of the estimated $11 billion (with a follow-on $11 billion more) that was about to be put in the "hopper" in Kabul over a 10- to 15-year period.[9] The facilitation and implementation of this "spout" became one of the PRT's primary tasks throughout 2007 and will be examined in detail later.

With the ANDS completed and Afghan Cabinet approval pending in March 2007, SAT-A, itself, had to evolve. SAT-A had strategic leverage and credibility and delivered significant effects, but it possibly could be used as a mechanism to influence developments in Kabul as they related to Canadian objectives in Kandahar Province specifically. This was one view that emerged in CEFCOM in early 2007. Col Mike Capstick and his SAT-A crew were being replaced after more than a year's hard work and now it was time to alter course. Col Don Dixon took the reins in early 2007 with a mandate to "Shape and assist the delivery of Afghan/Canadian effects in Kandahar Province" and to "make every effort to relay any relevant information on Afghan government initiatives that may impact Canada's efforts in Afghanistan." Key organizations that SAT-A was to maintain informal involvement with included the Special Economic Advisor to the President; the Chief of Staff to the President; Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development; Justice; Education; Transport; Aviation; Communications; and the Independent Civil Service Reform Commission. One of the key pieces of information SAT-A was to keep an eye out for was the "likelihood of democratic transition in 2009."[10]

At least, that is what it looked like on paper. Issues with the implementation of SAT-A activities throughout 2007 related to the new interest that the Canadian government was showing in the wake of Operation MEDUSA. This was in part a response to vociferous

domestic criticism over why Canada was fighting rather than rebuilding and developing in the country, and to criticism over why the efforts of various Canadian government departments were not as coordinated as they should be.[11]

The tri-departmental agreement between the Department of National Defence (DND), Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) that produced the original PRT construct was moribund by late 2006. Though there were dedicated people from CIDA, DFAIT, and CIVPOL on the ground in Kandahar, the Glyn Berry assassination had long-lasting effects on their ability to carry out tasks outside of Camp Nathan Smith because their parent departments insisted on security measures that made movement difficult, if not impossible, in some cases. Until the Force Protection Company arrived in November–December 2006, the PRT personnel simply could not get "out and about" and do business in the volume that was required by an ever-evolving situation. When the means were available, the situation improved. However, the relationship between SAT-A and the embassy seriously deteriorated.

Canadian Ambassador David Sproule was a contributor to the Policy Action Group, which was established in Kabul during 2006 as a crucial advisory mechanism to coordinate the Afghan government's approach to the war and to development with its international partners. This high-level group within the Afghan government emerged from a process that SAT-A subtly encouraged to respond to President Karzai's concern about information sharing on the state of the insurgency. Karzai needed quick answers to three questions: Who is fighting us and why? Why is there such a disconnect between Kabul and the population? How do we increase development and security in southern Afghanistan? The Policy Action Group consisted of representatives from ISAF, Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A), the United Nations Special Representative, three Afghan ministries (Interior, Education, and Rural Development) and selected ambassadors. "The main card," as a SAT-A staffer explained, "was the 2,300 troops [Canada] had in Regional Command (South)." In theory, DFAIT should have been looking for opportunities to assert Canadian influence, but after Chris Alexander ceased to be ambassador, DFAIT was "not switched on" in the Kabul environment and according to SAT-A, opportunities were lost to leverage Canadian input.[12]

SAT-A members had the impression that there was a personality clash between Sproule and Commander ISAF, Lt.-Gen. Richards, and as a result, the Canadian ambassador was no longer welcome at ISAF headquarters and in other circles. However, Col Dixon from SAT-A was made welcome in those circles. This, combined with the SAT-A's coup on getting Canada included in the Policy Action Group, generated a certain amount of angst in DFAIT circles back in Ottawa, as did the elevation of former Canadian ambassador Chris Alexander to senior deputy in the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan

(UNAMA) after his departure from DFAIT. Alexander retained a strong and positive relationship with SAT-A. Indeed, when Lt.-Gen. McNeill took over from Richards in February 2007, one of his first moves was to call SAT-A for a briefing, which was done directly and not through the Canadian embassy. There were other inefficiencies, including juvenile behaviour directed toward SAT-A personnel by elements in the embassy over who could use embassy amenities. Sproule was increasingly seen as ineffective by elements in Ottawa seeking better interdepartmental cooperation.[13] Col Dixon and the SAT-A quietly continued on in the tradition of the Capstick SAT-A.

The issues with Sproule and Richards confirmed to the Clerk of the Privy Council Kevin Lynch what he suspected back in November 2006: the civilian-military relationship was not working in Afghanistan. There were also internal problems at DFAIT: the International Branch and the Bilateral Branch were at odds with each other over who handled Afghanistan. This competition interfered with prioritizing security issues. Consequently, the idea of an Associate Deputy Minister for Afghanistan within DFAIT emerged. Lynch selected David Mulroney as the man to sort this internal DFAIT problem out.[14] Mulroney's education included a bachelor's degree in English literature. He had never served in the armed forces or in a non-governmental organization. His professional experience was in complex Asian-Pacific trade issues but he had no experience with the Middle East or Southwest Asian affairs or personal experience with conflict zones.[15] He had, however, visited Afghanistan in the 1970s.

Mulroney was appointed to lead the Afghanistan Task Force within DFAIT in April 2007, which was supposed to be an interdepartmental body to coordinate Canadian government departments involved in Afghanistan.[16] The Afghanistan Task Force ran into substantial bureaucratic opposition from the other fiefdoms in DFAIT, particularly International Security. Mulroney forced the issue and by early 2007, he started to coordinate with LGen Mike Gauthier at CEFCOM and Stephen Wallace at CIDA. The objective, according to Mulroney, was to develop a "common narrative" and gain agreement on the interdepartmental issues. CIDA was a "cheque writing effort" while the military "saw Afghanistan as counter-insurgency enabled through civilian tools." Mulroney believed that in Afghanistan the civilian entities were underpowered and understaffed which was in part due to the Martin government's preoccupation with Haiti and the Sudan. Mulroney strove to make Afghanistan the number one priority in the DFAIT bureaucracy and to protect it.[17]

The first thing that Mulroney could influence was who was ambassador in Kabul. He chose Arif Lalani and this change was implemented in April–May 2007. Though he had been ambassador in Jordan for a year and brought some Ottawa-based bureaucratic experience to bear, Lalani had no military experience or significant experience working

in conflict zones, nor did he possess other qualifications related to such operations. Even the Afghan Kandahar leadership expressed skepticism regarding Lalani's credibility. After a meeting involving Qayyum Karzai, Ahmad Wali Karzai, Asadullah Khalid and the Kandahar Provincial Council, a senior power broker remarked to one Canadian present, "This one has a lot to learn."[18]

Lalani did not have a good working relationship with SAT-A, to put it mildly. Some believed that SAT-A was an affront to DFAIT and Lalani was perceived by those in SAT-A to be leaning in that direction. This led to continued friction, some of which veered into the juvenile lane. SAT-A tried to maintain the level of influence it had in Afghan circles after 2007 but was decreasingly able to influence a common Canadian approach in Kabul. Lalani and Mulroney wanted SAT-A removed or replaced with a DFAIT-controlled organization. That fight continued over the next two years.[19]

Canada seemed to have all the tools it needed to wield influence in Kabul to support the effort in the south, but it did not appear to be able to use them to full effect. This had negative consequences during the course of Canada's time in Kandahar as it forced Canada to focus on the operational level and shy away from the hard-won strategic influence scene in Kabul.

Joint Task Force Afghanistan and Task Force Kandahar

The changes in the command structure in late 2006 produced a situation where the same personnel manned two organizations: Joint Task Force Afghanistan Headquarters and Task Force Kandahar. JTF-A HQ was the Canadian national headquarters, while TF Kandahar was the designation for the units and capabilities assigned to NATO ISAF Regional Command (South) headquarters but were still commanded by the JTF Afghanistan Headquarters' staff. (For style and clarity, TF Kandahar will be used from here for both JTF-A HQ and Task Force Kandahar. See also Appendix A.)

TF Kandahar, for all intents and purposes, commanded a brigade. This was not a traditional, Second World War- or Cold War-like brigade by any means. In 2002 and 2006, almost all of the attention was focused on the battle group as the central generator of Canadian activity with everything else supporting it. By 2007, this was no longer the case. The PRT was enhanced by then and the OMLT was about to be; both were commanded by lieutenant-colonels and were quasi battalion-sized or equivalent structures. More and more "enablers" needed coordinating: psychological operations (PSYOPS), civil-military cooperation (CIMIC), UAVs, electronic warfare and counter-IED operations. The National Support Element (or Logistics Battalion in Cold War terms) was about to grow. There was theatre airlift in the form of a couple of CC-130 Hercules transports, and there was the Theatre Support Element in Dubai. The need to create synergistic effects from all of these elements assumed greater importance in Canadian circles.

TF Kandahar, in late 2006, struggled to identify where those synergies could take place. TF Kandahar, as discussed in the previous volume, was not manned for these activities and therefore had to be augmented and structurally altered. By February 2007, however, it was better positioned to carry out its tasks. The Provincial Operations Centre was up and running under LCol Tom Bradley, who previously served as Recce Squadron commander in 2002 and knew the environment. All Canadian units declared to Regional Command (South) were grouped on the NATO organizational chart as TF Kandahar but in reality, JTF Afghanistan and TF Kandahar became interchangeable terms.

With the greater number and variety of units rotating in and out, it was difficult to line them all up for relief in place at once. The TF 1-07 Battle Group arrived in February 2007. Based on 2 RCR, and led by LCol Walker, TF 1-07 was structurally similar to its predecessors, with three infantry companies, a tank squadron, a recce squadron, a combat engineer squadron and an artillery battery. TF 1-07 had two RCR companies, I and H, led by Maj David Quick and Maj Alex Ruff, respectively; C Company from the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (2PPCLI), led by Maj Chris Henderson; and D Battery, a M-777 battery, led by Maj Dan Bobbitt. 42 Field Squadron was led by Maj Jake Galuga. Commanded by Maj Steve Graham from the Royal Canadian Dragoons, the Reconnaissance Squadron replaced 1 RCR's ISTAR squadron. The Leopard tank squadron, which arrived in fall 2006, and became offset in its deployment with the infantry companies, had its arrival rationalized into the new rotation system. Maj Dave Broomfield and C Squadron replaced Maj Trevor Cadieu's A Squadron. The Operation Mentor and Liaison Team also rotated in by late-February. Under the command of LCol Wayne Eyre, the OMLT was expanded to accommodate its new tasks (see below).

The decision was made in higher circles to have the Commanding Officer of the Kandahar PRT stay for a year-long tour to attain some level of continuity in the reconstruction, development and governance areas. LCol Chamberlain moved into Camp Nathan Smith in February. The PRT retained its own mechanized infantry company and "enablers." All of the CIMIC personnel in the task force were now concentrated at the PRT.

What about the "enablers"? Most of these were ISTAR-oriented. The All Source Intelligence Centre was commanded by Major Steve Desjardins. There was the Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicle organization and the Mobile Electronic Warfare Teams from 2 Electronic Warfare (EW) Squadron: the TUAV fed into the battlegroup Tactical Operations Centre and the TF Kandahar Provincial Operations Centre, while the Mobile Electronic Warfare Teams were deployed in detachments with Recce Squadron or the rest of the battle group as required. In time, a Surveillance and Target Acquisition Battery was formed to deal with force protection issues at Forward Operating Base Ma'Sum Ghar.

Another new organization was the Military Police Company, led by Maj Bernard Hudson, who took over from Maj Jeff Harvey. In the previous rotations, a Military Police platoon shuttlecocked between the battle group and the PRT. With the new requirements related to police training expansion and to the detainee issue in 2007, the decision was made to have two Military Police platoons: one at the PRT and another at KAF. There was also an increased protective requirement as the Canadian Forces National Investigative Service was now responsible for detailed investigations into any Canadian death. This was done partly to offset political liability back in Canada. Each Canadian combat death was now to be treated as a murder would be back in Canada, so the Canadian Forces National Investigative Service detachment had to be escorted when deployed.[20]

TF Kandahar itself underwent changes. The headquarters now had to keep better track of developments in the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) as well as reconstruction issues and then act as an advisor or link between Ottawa policy makers and operations in the field. CTF Aegis had the same functions in the past, as it was an Operation ENDURING FREEDOM headquarters led by a Canadian. When it was replaced with a NATO headquarters led by a Dutchman, Canada had to have a repository for national assessment and input. Where was the delineation between what the PRT did in these areas and what TF Kandahar was supposed to do? And how did that relate to national priorities or coalition priorities? That drama played out continuously in 2007–2008.

One new development was the relationship between TF Kandahar and the Canadian SOF in the south. Up to now, Canadian SOF organizations remained somewhat aloof from the Canadian command structure in the country and preferred to work as part of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM's Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force. An increasingly crowded battle space demanded more and better coordination. After some debate between the Canadian SOF leadership and Generals Hillier, Leslie, Gauthier and Grant, a line on the organizational chart was re-drawn and paperwork rewritten so that TF Kandahar ostensibly had increased input into Canadian SOF activities in the TF Kandahar battle space. The relationship between Canadian SOF and TF Kandahar improved marginally in the first half of 2007.[21]

The TF Kandahar structure of 2007 outwardly resembled the structures of TF Kandahar in later years. However, each headquarters rotation should be seen as a unique entity, specifically because of the composition of the personalities involved and the differing pressures on each headquarters given the operational situation extant at the time. There was a learning curve on all areas of interest each time a new headquarters rotated in, and those rotations were not set at nine months until 2007–2008. As a result, it was difficult to attain a steady state at the best of times—and these were not the best of times. The intent was to attain a deep coordination of Canadian efforts, but that intent was not realized during the first half of 2007.

Development Matters and the Provincial Reconstruction Team, February–April 2007

The Kandahar PRT and its operations achieved a high profile in 2007. Those in Ottawa, Washington, Brussels and Kabul who wanted a more "developmental" public face on the mission worked to enable the PRTs to show to critics that Afghanistan was not all about combat. By necessity, LCol Simon Hetherington's PRT had been focused on supporting efforts related to Operation MEDUSA but had by dint of their improved mobility and the reduced level of enemy activity started to branch out by January 2007. LCol Chamberlain and the new PRT took stock on arrival in accordance with new pressures from Ottawa and NATO to get visible reconstruction and development programmes moving. At the same time, TF Kandahar's new structure had a J5 cell devoted to reconstruction, development and governance issues, while Regional Command (South) also carried on with its attempts to rationalize these aspects across all southern provinces. The PRT was not the sole clearing house for the province any longer, but it would take some time to draw the boundaries. Getting the J5 and PRT to communicate was comparatively easy. Dealing with Regional Command (South) was something else and as time went on, TF Kandahar and the PRT more or less paid lip service to what Regional Command (South) thought it was doing while it was commanded by Maj.-Gen. van Loon. In a general sense, J5 kept abreast of the KAF and Kabul axis in military, policing and information operations matters, while the PRT handled the development community and the Kandahar City and district axis. TF Kandahar retained a Development Advisor from CIDA and a Political Advisor from DFAIT, but they were there to advise the commander, not run programmes at the PRT or act as the command and control conduit to Ottawa through the ambassador in Kabul.[22]

The ANDS "operationalization" process was still underway in spring 2007 so in its early weeks, the new PRT looked at the previous strategy and what had been wrought in Kandahar Province. The original 2001 Bonn Agreement pillars that acted as the strategic framework for development were all in varying states of collapse. There were no Italian judicial training personnel to be seen in Kandahar, nor was there a single German police trainer: neither country's personnel had been to the province since Canadians deployed in 2005, four years after Bonn. The Disbandment of Illegally Armed Groups (DIAG) process had completely fizzled out the previous year. What about the counternarcotics pillar led by the United Kingdom? There was no visible, let alone viable, alternative livelihoods programme in operation to wean farmers away from poppy farming in Kandahar Province; counternarcotics was all eradication-based. There was no sequencing, no coordination. There may have been a counternarcotics strategy, but nobody seemed to know what it was.[23]

As a result, LCol Chamberlain, his deputy Maj Chip Madic and their staff looked for as many linkages as they could in an attempt to connect what Kabul thought it wanted with what was actually going on in Kandahar. There were few to be found. The one area that the PRT could be effective lay in matters of police coordination. There were disparate elements involved in this activity: the Canadian civilian police officers at the PRT, led by Superintendent David Fudge; the DynCorp contract trainers at the Regional Training Center; and the TF Kandahar Military Police Company. Maj Hudson worked up a Mobile Mentor Teams concept based on his experiences as an exchange officer with the Royal Military Police in Iraq. LCol Hetherington's staff had already advanced ideas on the need for better Kandahar City security measures when Regional Command (South) was looking for alternatives to Zharey operations. These ideas eventually coalesced as Operation PORTCULLIS.[24]

PORTCULLIS was the security plan for Kandahar City and as such, it had numerous interlocking objectives. The first was to establish a grid of movement control points to generate observation, surveillance and security on vital routes. Second, PORTCULLIS would take these temporary checkpoints and convert them to permanent checkpoints. Third, certain checkpoints would transition into permanent police sub-stations. The most important aspect of PORTCULLIS outside of this was to enable chief of police General Alizai and his organization, such as it was. Another part of PORTCULLIS was finding enough manpower to implement the plan and hold them in one place to train them, as there was constant demand in the districts for partially-trained "warm bodies" to act as militia.[25]

Operation PORTCULLIS allowed the new PRT to "shake out" and get all of its moving parts working. Land had to be selected and acquired or bargained for. The sites had to be cleared of unexploded ordnance. Architects and engineers needed to plan each site. Contracts had to be let. The city and provincial leadership had to be engaged. The police needed to be trained and mentored. Consequently, the Force Protection Company focussed on delivering PRT personnel to meetings all over the city. In other words, everyone from the Specialist Engineer Team to the DFAIT representative, Gavin Buchan, became involved in PORTCULLIS. Why DFAIT? Institutionally, CIDA did not like getting its hands dirty by supporting coercive structures like police and DFAIT possessed a Global Peace and Security fund that could be tapped. PORTCULLIS would chug along throughout 2007 and eventually deliver a significantly higher level of security, particularly on the vital and exposed Highway 4 "IED Alley" artery southeast of the city.[26] Enemy activity would, over the course of the year, drop off completely in this area and that state of affairs continued until 2010.

The PRT continued to be the CIMIC operations repository as in the past, and, as before, the tension between short-term reconstruction and long-term development continued to play itself out in 2007. Under Hetherington's PRT, the CIMIC teams were tactically controlled by the infantry companies in the battle group they were assigned to but still drew on PRT funding and projects. In Chamberlain's organization, seven teams specialized in the districts where Canadians were operating. As before, the CIMIC teams remained the "eyes and ears" of reconstruction and development in the province.[27]

The teams were more operational than tactical as the PRT tried to move away from battle-damage infrastructure payouts toward projects that had more of an impact on the districts as a whole. This was not always possible, as the PRT discovered with the Route Summit irrigation issues. This bureaucratic morass involved compensation for damage to the fragile water supply situation in eastern Zharey when the road was initially put in. The Governor, Asadullah Khalid, announced back in early October 2006 that "lands lost as a result of Route Summit will not be compensated until the security declaration is given,"[28] that is, until the elders gave their word to Khalid that they would take responsibility for the security situation in Pashmul. This never took place and the PRT was drawn in, in an attempt to find a solution to this "chicken-egg" problem. Another factor that underpinned this dispute was that the Pashmul bazaar was owned by Habibullah Jan in Senjaray and he did not get along with district leader Khairuddin, who, in turn, was appointed by Jan's antagonist, Governor Asadullah Khalid. As with everything in Kandahar, there were multiple layers of local disputes that the Taliban could exploit at any given time—and did.[29] The United Arab Emirates' initiative regarding PRT contributions and a possible battle group deployment to Spin Boldak died sometime in the first half of 2007. The reasons for the initiative's demise remain unclear but no Emirates troops were coming to relieve the pressure on TF Kandahar.[30]

One hallmark of this particular PRT rotation was its initial attempts at leveraging religious engagement. Padre Suleyman Demiray once again arrived in Kandahar to help map out the religious terrain. There were two organizations of interest: the Kandahar Ulema Shura and the Hajj/Awqaf (also called Ministry of Hajj and Islamic Affairs). The Ulema Shura was the central body of religious scholars in southern Afghanistan while the Hajj/Awqaf was technically the government agency responsible for arranging transport for the Hajj to Mecca. Both organizations wanted assistance in expanding their influence in order to counter Taliban ideology, but both encountered problems with the Kandahar government. The Governor refused to allocate protective resources to the Ulema Shura, while the Hajj/Awqaf could not tap into development monies because the Provincial Development Committee was not functioning. The situation was aggravated by the fact that the Taliban

continued with its assassination campaign against moderate members of the Ulema Shura in January and February 2007. Both organizations communicated their needs to the PRT through Padre Demiray: these were duly passed on. The PRT, however, could only handle limited mosque refurbishment. CIDA was not structured to handle programming for what amounted to religious information operations, while Gavin Buchan passed the requests through the DFAIT chain to the embassy. He was given a negative reply.[31]

This was extremely frustrating, especially for experienced Canadian personnel in the PRT and J5 who understood that the insurgents co-opted the mosques to get their message to the population and "wandering mullahs" moved unhindered with their messaging throughout the province. Padre Demiray himself was subjected to what amounted to petty internal branch politics as some padres objected to being "used" as "effects weapons." Padre Demiray was disinclined to continue his involvement with religious engagement in Kandahar after 2007. With some frustration, the whole religious engagement file was tacitly handed over to the U.S. Special Forces PSYOPS organizations. The Government of Canada ceded control of this crucial element of the war to others and essentially refused to fight the Taliban on this field of battle.[32] The failure to address religious engagement in a coordinated and meaningful fashion at this crucial juncture and later should rate as one of Canada's main failures of the Kandahar campaign, with equal and proportionate blame across the departments. This permitted the enemy to attain a level of credibility with the population unhindered, and that influence grew over the next four years, particularly in the rural districts.

The "operationalization" of the ANDS slid sideways into events in the early months of spring. Development money for projects decided upon at the community level (Community Development Council), prioritized at the district level (District Development Assembly) and then approved and prioritized at the provincial level (Provincial Development Committee) was not flowing as planned. The Community Development Councils were supposed to be created and mentored by UN HABITAT, while the District Development Assemblies were supposed to be set up by the National Area Based Development Programme. There was no official mentor for the Provincial Development Committee, which was essentially moribund in the wake of Operation MEDUSA.[33]

The whole system was not working. First, the Governor was not interested in the development council: he had no staff, lacked motivation on development issues and was focused on the security situation. Second, UN leadership in the south was at this point non-existent. This slowed down UN HABITAT's Community Development Council programming as there was nobody to fall in behind UN HABITAT after they set up each community council to connect them to the district assemblies. As for the National Area

Based programme, it was dysfunctional as well, so not all of the district assemblies were up and running. None of the entities were comfortable establishing Community Development Councils and District Development Assemblies in districts where the security situation was uncertain, let alone violent.[34]

It was left up to the PRT to jump-start the whole system and try to connect the moving parts. The first thing was to "mentor" the Governor on the Provincial Development Committee: CIDA funded two people to act as the Provincial Development Committee Secretariat, with a PRT senior advisor. Unreliable data suggested that 532 communities in nine of the province's districts had Community Development Councils, but the critical districts to the west were under-represented. UN HABITAT was not getting any contract money from the province, so CIDA funded 40 of those community council projects. The province did not disperse any block grants at all to the communities. There were active programmes in Dand, Khakrez and Spin Boldak, however, and the linkages between Community Development Councils and their respective District Development Assemblies appeared functional to the PRT.[35] CIMIC played a role in working with the Community Development Council and District Development Assembly in Zharey to assist with the teardown of the Route Summit strong points as a test case. It was a slow start and it would take time.

A project that would occupy central importance for the Canadian effort in Afghanistan was the Dahla Dam and its associated irrigation system rehabilitation project. The importance of the Arghandab River in Kandahar's economic life is self-evident but the economic and employment benefits of a large-scale project attracted President Hamid Karzai and Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Ehsan Zia, for political as well as economic reasons. They put a formal request in to Canada for assistance with the project, and CIDA rapidly contracted for an expert assessment team in February 2007. By April, and not coincident to the Mullah Naqib assassination attempt and Operation ADALAT, Governor Asadullah Khalid jumped on the band wagon and, with a million dollars of advertising, promoted Dahla Dam as the biggest "soon to come" project in the media. High expectations with the public were raised right from the beginning. It is important to understand this state of affairs, given what occurred later in the campaign. The Dahla Dam project was an issue long before Canada seriously committed to its rehabilitation and there was significant Afghan political context to that decision.[36]

What was not understood in Canadian circles at the time was that the Popalzai power structure's domination of the Dahla Dam project would lead to Popalzai domination of the Arghandab district, the home of the Alikozais. Arghandab district controlled water to all of the other down-river districts and to the city. Water was crucial for economic activity.

Whoever controlled Arghandab controlled the water and thus had influence over agricultural activity (both licit and illicit).[37] The Alikozais would likely take exception to Popalzai domination in some form. For the most part, Canadian representatives on the ground at the time and in Ottawa had no idea what they were getting involved with, and particularly what the larger security implications might be. Canada was focused simplistically on supporting "the government" to help "the people" and would continue to do so for many years after. By supporting the Dahla Dam project, Canada was seen to be siding with the Popalzai power structure or were seen to be naive by others in Kandahar's political arena. Both perceptions left Canada vulnerable on several fronts.

However, there were more important issues for the Canadian media to focus on. In March 2007, *The Globe and Mail* published an article claiming that persons detained by Canadian forces in the field and handed over to Afghan security forces were subsequently abused in various holding facilities. The Opposition later used this article for their purposes in the House of Commons. The Taliban's information operations organization then latched on to the controversy and twisted it through its particular ideological lens for consumption by Afghans and jihadist supporters around the world. The Canadian government was forced to react to these allegations and this had serious consequences for TF Kandahar and its units, especially the PRT, which was involved in assisting the Afghans in improving conditions at Sarposa Prison and mentoring the police.

The most important aspect of the detainee controversy was not just in the specifics of what was allegedly perpetrated on the supposed victims, or how culpable Canada was in the eyes of the human rights industry, nor did it really lie in the possible destabilization of a minority government in Canada. The controversy's importance laid in exposing the complete lack of a functional judicial system in Kandahar Province. Subsequently, significant PRT effort was expended in assessing the nature of the judicial system; CIDA was focused elsewhere, DFAIT had some funding for police, Corrections Canada was involved in prison rehabilitation, and that was about it. LCol Chamberlain tasked his Legal Advisor, LCdr Gina Connor, with figuring out how the judicial system was supposed to work, while Corrections Canada personnel at the PRT collaterally gained insight into the prison system. Public agitation in Canada over incarceration matters certainly put the cart before the horse. Without a functional police force, let alone a judiciary, Western-style law and order was simply not possible in Kandahar.

This all diverted significant resources from other activities, though it definitely laid bare the complete failure of Italy to do what it pledged six years before in 2001. Certainly, Canadian prisoner of war handling would not have made the news, let alone led to questioning the war effort, during the Second World War. In the post-Somalia Inquiry

world, however, any hint of improper behaviour toward prisoners was political dynamite in Canada. Any insurgent specializing in information operations could easily pick up on this vulnerability through online research and exploit it to the fullest. When the Canadian detainee facility was up and running in 2008 some prisoners exhibited specialized training on how to play to these vulnerabilities.[38]

Expanding the Operational Mentor Liaison Team

The work done by LCol Lanthier and his original OMLT in late 2006 paid dividends when LCol Eyre and his team arrived in February 2007. On arrival, they learned that each Afghan Corps had several associated brigades, not divisions. Each brigade consisted of several battalion-sized organizations called *kandaks*. Usually there were three "Rifle" kandaks, designated 1st through 3rd Kandak; a Combat Support Kandak (4th Kandak) that grouped artillery, engineers and reconnaissance companies; and a Combat Service Support Kandak (5th Kandak) for logistics. For 1-205 Brigade in Kandahar, these units were properly named 1st through 5th Kandak, 1st Brigade, 205 Corps but Canadian shorthand occasionally tossed back and forth between "Kandak 1" and "1st Kandak" and so on.[39]

At this point, the Afghan National Army organization for 1-205 Brigade had the 1st and 3rd Kandak in the Brigade mentored by the Dutch, with 2nd Kandak still mentored by Canadians. One of the Dutch-mentored kandaks was deployed in Oruzgan Province. The brigade headquarters was American-mentored as were the Combat Support and Combat Service Support Kandaks. 2nd Kandak from 1-209 Brigade was also in the area but mentored by U.S. Special Forces. Not all kandaks were deployed at full strength.[40]

Lt.-Col. Sherin Shah's 2nd Kandak had deployed elements on Canadian operations alongside 2 RCR Battle Group, but had not really been included in the Canadian planning process. For the most part, the kandaks were able to operate at the platoon-level but had not been given the opportunity to plan and work cohesively at the company and kandak levels yet. One of the reasons for this was that the American special forces regularly hived off companies "so that they could get an "Afghan face" for their operations."[41] In that sense, they were levies of a sort but the Canadian approach set out to change that perception.

BGen Tim Grant endorsed the view that mentoring the Afghan National Army was part of the larger and long-term NATO exit strategy and was prepared to allocate resources to support almost any task that assisted 1-205 Brigade and 205 Corps. ISAF and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM were shielding the Afghan reconstruction effort—and that included the security forces. Once again, however, the tension between short-term employment for tactical or operational response versus long-term self-sufficient capacity building came to the fore, especially when Regional Command (South) under van Loon and his successors regularly shifted forces to Helmand at the expense of operations in Kandahar.[42]

1-205 Brigade was a brigade in name only. To move the brigade beyond the "levy" stage, it was crucial that its ability to independently plan and then be able to sustain its operations be significantly strengthened. That meant robustly mentoring the brigade headquarters and especially the combat service support (logistic) kandak in a systematic fashion, moving far beyond the ad hoc support provided by the NSE in 2006. The existing tension between NATO, the U.S. SOF community and the National Guard brigade at the Afghan National Training Center in Kabul over who got Afghan kandaks was subsequently exploited by TF Kandahar. When the American ETT at the 1-205 Brigade headquarters was ready to rotate home, TF Kandahar offered to take on the mentoring task. Similarly, the combat service support kandak mentoring task came up for rotation and TF Kandahar cut away troops from the NSE, the PRT, and the battle group to the OMLT so they could mentor the combat service support kandak. This produced some tension at CEFCOM, as LGen Gauthier believed that partnering kandaks with Canadian battle groups and NSEs was the path to take instead of mentoring with smaller sub-units. TF Kandahar did not receive a troop level increase to do the partnering task, so they augmented the OMLT from existing forces in Afghanistan. The Canadian contingent at the Afghan National Training Center in Kabul was withdrawn as a result of these changes, which reduced Canadian saliency in Kabul.[43]

The Afghan National Army also altered its deployment in the south, took Oruzgan away from 1-205 Brigade, and re-numbered some kandaks. In its relatively steady state, the Afghan National Army could deploy two infantry kandaks (rotating between each other) mentored by Canada, a combat support kandak mentored by Americans, and a combat service support kandak mentored by Canadians. The three fighting kandaks were "fed" by American Logistical Support Teams connected to the combat service support kandak, while the brigade headquarters for 1-205 Brigade was Canadian-mentored.

When all was said and done, the new OMLT structure had mentors at corps, brigade and kandak levels. The kandak mentor team was led by Maj James Price. Each Afghan company in the kandak had a Canadian company mentoring team of six people, led by a captain mounted in RG-31 Nyalas. An OMLT Security Force (SECFOR) and a small logistics structure made up the OMLT Support Element. SECFOR consisted of an RG-31 platoon and their crews, and a forward observation officer/forward air controller who handled fire support, resupply, extraction and protection for the mentors. SECFOR permitted the Afghan kandaks access to ISAF close air support and artillery.[44]

Mentoring at the non-commissioned officers level, where the Afghan National Army was weak, played right to the Canadian Army's strengths. The highly-experienced and mature Canadian NCO culture was a crucial element in the relationship building and training process, which contributed dramatically to the OMLT successes in 2007 and in later years.

Moving the yardsticks forward on Afghan National Army development was a slow and painstaking process. LCol Eyre and his men were confronted with a new army that had constantly shifting internal dynamics:

> ANA leadership come from a variety of backgrounds—former national Army, various Mujahideen factions or both—and various tribal and ethnic groupings. Although their loyalty to the Government of Afghanistan is considered primary, political turmoil could result in old loyalties resurfacing.[45]

To drive the point home, Canadian mentors were confronted with assisting an army where pay was irregular, death and disability benefits were non-existent, and leave policy was flexible. This led to an absentee rate of 10%–20%, and sometimes higher. It was an uphill struggle to assist the Afghans in building a professional army but the OMLT seized the opportunities and moved forward.[46] The OMLT had to give the Afghans an opportunity to learn from their mistakes—even when it affected Canadian operations. The Afghan soldiers were not Canadian levies; they were partners fighting for and in their own country. There were some Canadians, unfortunately, who forgot these important points in later years, but in 2007 the spirit of partnership and mentoring was alive and well, especially after LCol Walker and LCol Eyre had a meeting of minds and the relationship between Maj Price and Lt.-Col. Sherin Shah was forged under the fire of the first operations.

Battle Group Dispositions and Actions, February 2007

The 2 RCR Battle Group initially fell in on 1 RCR Battle Group's positions in Zharey and Panjwayi. Patrol Base Wilson and FOB Ma'Sum Ghar were the primary "anchors" for the strong points located along Route Summit. At this time, LTC Don Bolduc's TF 31 with associated Afghan National Army companies from 2nd Kandak and 1-205 Brigade were set up in patrol bases in Mushan, Talukan, Zangabad, and co-located with Canadian forces at FOB Sperwan Ghar. (See Figure 1-1.)

LCol Walker and his task force arrived to find the Arghandab River in full flood, with no means to cross it at FOB Zettelmeyer. As a result, the battle group had to track back along Route Fosters East to Highway 1 and then to Patrol Base Wilson for some weeks. That was not all: 2 RCR Battle Group was greeted with a pair of suicide vehicle-borne IEDs which, fortunately, produced no casualties except for the bombers. More insidiously, however, was the enemy's deployment of a mentally-challenged man as a false suicide bomber. This unfortunate individual, equipped with wiring inside a vest but no explosives, was gunned down by LCol Walker when he approached his Tactical Headquarters convoy and ignored instructions to stay away. The following day, a Canadian convoy proceeding

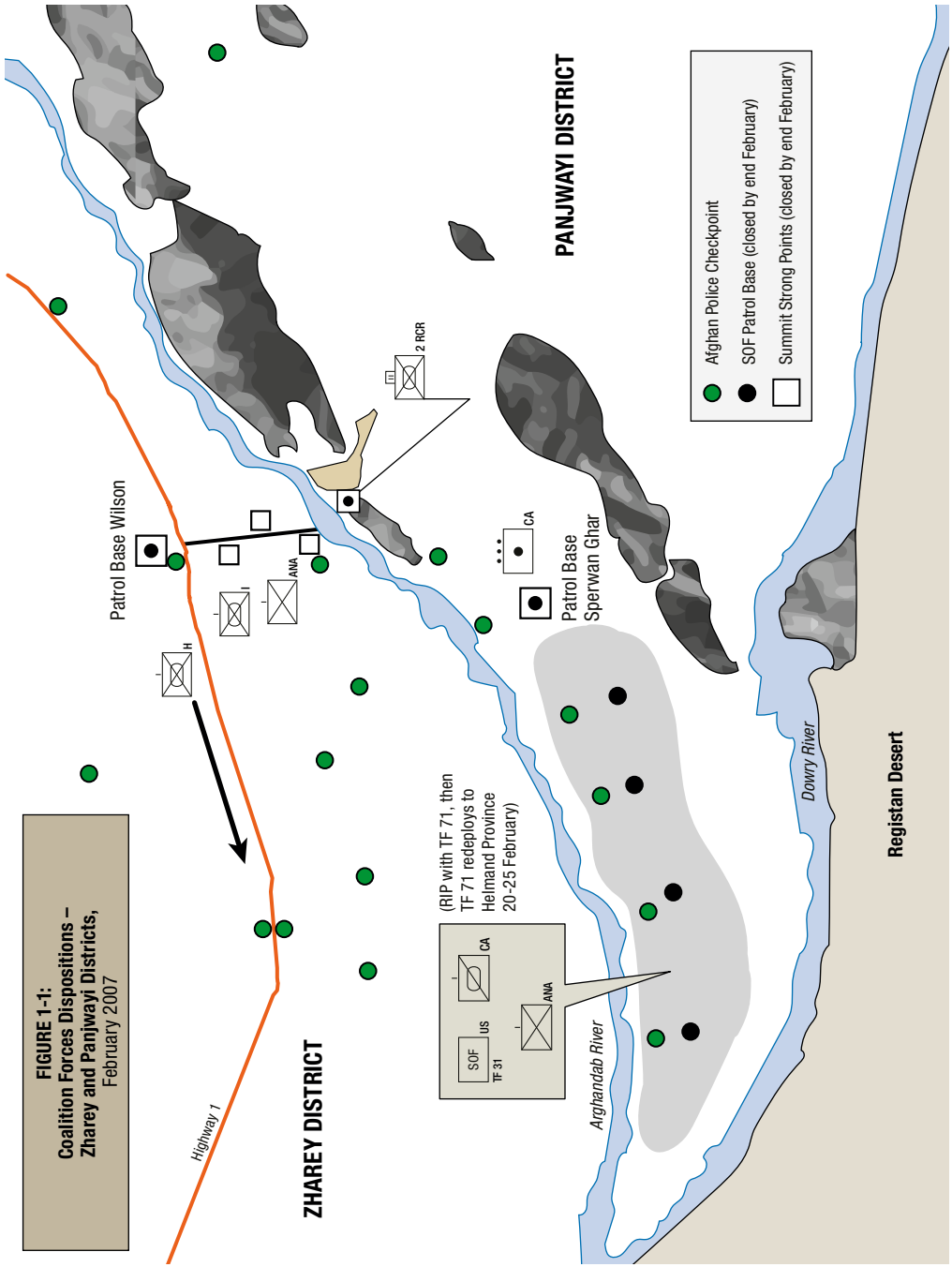


Figure 1-1: Coalition Forces Dispositions – Zharey and Panjwayi Districts, February 2007

down Highway 4 into the city was engaged with small-arms fire and then with RPG fire in two separate locations. Blowing through the ambush, the convoy made its way to the Governor's Palace where they mistakenly engaged an Afghan policeman who was guarding the Joint Provincial Coordination Centre (JPCC). While 2 RCR Battle Group was unsnarling itself from these incidents, the enemy launched an attack on the Afghan police positions at Kolk in Zharey District and Maj Ruff and H Company got into a contact near Howz-e Madad. That was all within one week of transfer of command authority.[47]

LCol Walker and his staff were skeptical of the existing 1 RCR Battle Group dispositions. They believed that the previous battle group had adopted a "bunker mentality" that was compounded by their losses, particularly the death of their regimental sergeant major. Furthermore, the perception was that the battle group was psychologically tied to Route Summit and its strong points, and were not conducting counterinsurgency operations. The existing plan, BAAZ TSUKA Phase 3C, was not specific in these dispositions, so 2 RCR battle group planners quickly set out to re-assess the situation. This took about a month before it was fully implemented, but the first thing the battle group did was to tear down the Route Summit strong points and implement an aggressive patrolling plan in Zharey District.[48]

Maj Graham and Recce Squadron were initially based in Sperwan Ghar where they worked with TF 31 and its Afghan National Army charges. It took some time for Recce Squadron to flow in and, in any event, it now consisted of two eight-car Coyote troops instead of one, thus altering operating procedures established during previous rotations. Recce Squadron sortied out of Sperwan Ghar and supported TF 31 efforts in the communities to the west: Zangabad, Talukan, and Mushan. The U.S. Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha worked with locals to improve the road system and brought in contractors to connect the three communities. In time, LCol Walker attached Recce Platoon to Recce Squadron but while it was deploying through Kandahar City Recce got into a firefight that damaged almost all of its RG-31 vehicles.[49]

Within three weeks, TF 31 was relieved with LTC Pat Mahaney's TF 71 and part of a kandak from 1-209 Brigade. TF 71 and this kandak were subsequently withdrawn and sent to Helmand as part of Operation ACHILLES. This left a huge vacuum in western Panjwayi District and all of the projects there stopped. When BGen Grant complained to Maj.-Gen. van Loon, he was told to man the vacated checkpoints with his clerks and cooks. Needless to say, BGen Grant was not impressed.[50]

Regional Command (South) changed its mind on this issue once again: its objective was now to "render the Taliban ineffective" within the ADZ and keep the lines of communications open, while at the same time enabling the international community

and the non-governmental organizations to deploy reconstruction and development aid. TF Kandahar's interpretation of Regional Command (South)'s intent was to "isolate the Kandahar ADZ from insurgent influence" and focus "within the Kandahar ADZ" in order to "promote Government of Afghanistan and Government of Kandahar authority." Notably, and given the political climate back in Canada, TF Kandahar reminded its units that it was vital to "defend our nation's support for this vital mission."[51]

Initially I Company would handle Route Summit area then would move to western Zharey District and Maywand while the Afghan security forces would secure central and eastern Zharey. C Company would operate from FOB Ma'Sum Ghar and in western Zharey as well. H Company was designated a power projection company but the removal of TF 71 altered the original plan. In a general sense, I Company focused on Zharey, while C Company looked toward Bazaar-e Panjwayi and the Sperwan Ghar areas, with the hope that the Afghan forces would continue to handle western Panjwayi.[52]

LCol Walker and the 2 RCR Battle Group staff believed that partnered operations with the Afghan National Army should be a central aspect of any task force operations and wanted to establish their credentials immediately both with the Afghans and the enemy. Over the course of the next month, LCol Walker and LCol Eyre and his OMLT worked with 1-205 Brigade to make this happen. One of the first operations was Operation MINOTAUR, mounted on 13 February. I Company and an Afghan National Army company received information on the location of a weapons cache located east of Route Summit. It was a good "shake out" with no contact. Exploitation of the cache site revealed the stockpiling of Canadian "junk" for reuse by the insurgents, including a 155mm carrier shell about to be modified as an IED. Insight into the enemy's medical system came to light. The insurgents used Mirwais Hospital as one of their primary care facilities and relied particularly on their X-ray department.[53]

H Company, plus part of an Afghan National Army company with Canadian mentors from the OMLT deployed down Highway 1 to Howz-e Madad on a disruption patrol during the relief in place on 23 February. The Afghan National Army uncovered information that the Taliban commander for Zharey District, Mullah Manan, had a compound south of the bazaar. Probing south from Highway 1, the force encountered substantial small-arms and RPG fire from three positions and responded in kind. The M-777 guns from D Battery and close air support from a B-1B bomber and two F-16s were brought to bear. There was an estimated nine enemy killed, many, of note, by the Afghan National Army. Tanks from B Squadron linked up and the force leaguered for the night and returned to base.[54]

The Character of the Insurgency in 2007

As operations progressed in the first half of 2007, it was increasingly evident that the insurgency's character had changed even though the Quetta Shura leadership remained the same. Afghan security personnel told Canadians that they believed the insurgency was weaker now because the Taliban rarely stood and fought as they had in 2006 and shifted to "suicide bombers and mined roads." In any place there was ISAF and Afghan National Army presence, the enemy generally kept a low profile. As a result, it was not necessarily clear who controlled what.[55]

Other analysis involving local views correctly noted that "although insurgents may be responsible in numerous cases, it is believed that commercial, political, factional, and personal interests may also be responsible"[56] for attacks against the aid community. Indeed, it appeared as though the insurgents shifted their IED targeting against heavily armoured ISAF vehicles to the unprotected Afghan National Army and Afghan police Ford Ranger pickup trucks, as well as the aid community's unarmoured commercial logistics vehicles. Moderate mullahs were assassinated to shape the insurgent's message in the mosques. In effect, the whole vulnerable Afghan reconstruction and governance system was under attack, not just its security forces. Experienced foreign fighters were heard to complain on their means of communication that "This Jihad is hard!" after they spent time in the Canadian area of operation up against 2 RCR Battle Group.[57]

In March 2007, TF Kandahar became aware that there was a Taliban campaign plan, dubbed "The Akhund Plan" after one of its authors, Mullah Obaidullah Akhund. The Akhund Plan was strategically focused on "fixing ISAF to their bases and cutting off the major lines of communications to Kandahar City" in order to isolate the south of the country from Kabul both physically and psychologically; force ISAF and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM forces out; and then realize a Taliban state for the whole country. Operationally, this translated to limiting the expansion of the Afghan security forces and government; limiting the coalition's freedom of movement; and generating casualties to get domestic political pressure in NATO countries to withdraw from ISAF.[58] (See Figure 1-2.)

During Operation ACHILLES, ISAF forces seized documents that laid out the changing doctrinal basis for enemy action in the south. According to the material, "An insurgent needs five things":[59]

1. a main goal: freedom from infidels for Muslims in the name of Allah;

2. global support: support of Muslim nations. We need [compact discs] of [battle against infidels] to inform people of our struggle;

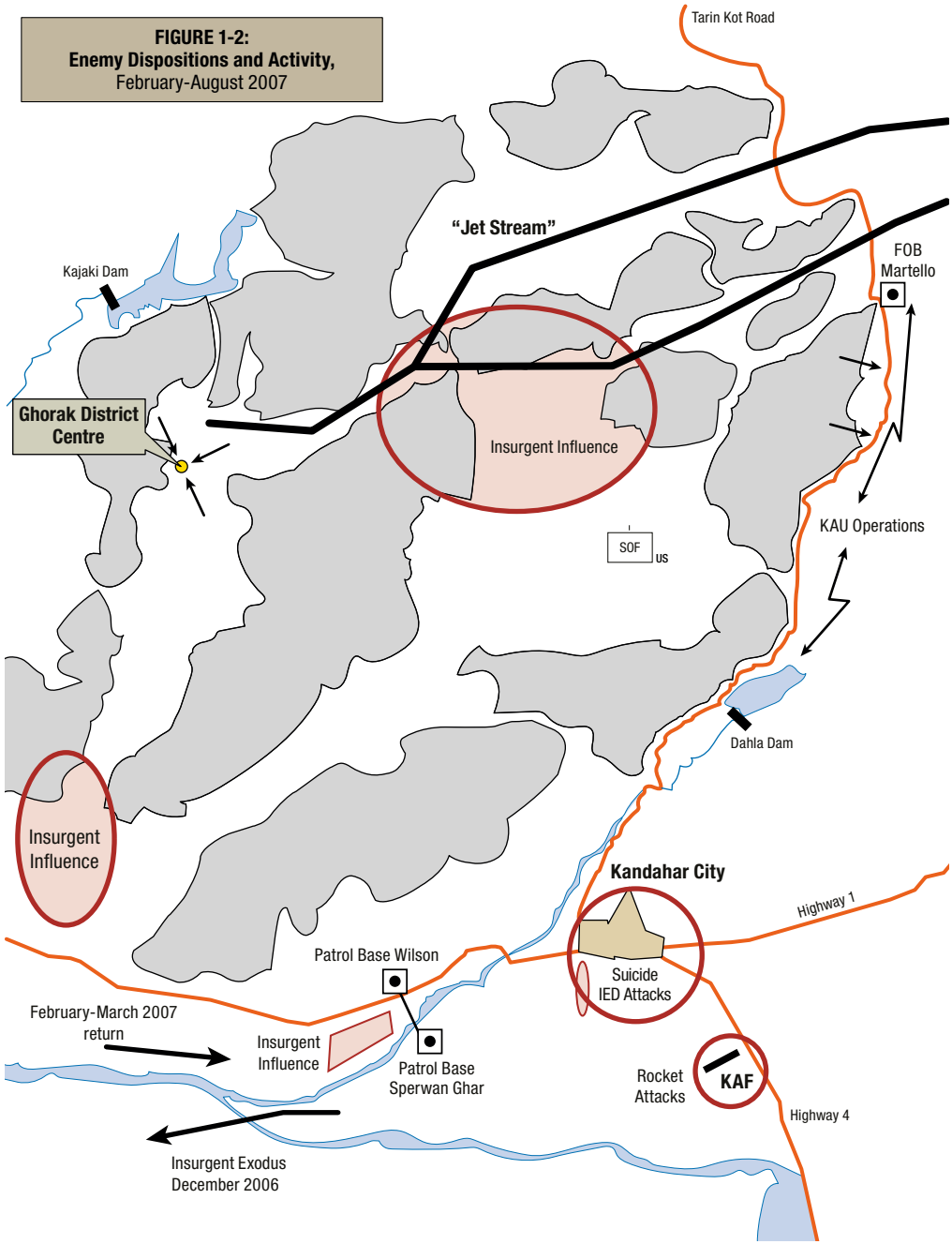


Figure 1-2: Enemy Dispositions and Activity, February-August 2007

3. regional support: treat the population with morality, honesty, and friendship in order to gain the needed assistance;

4. difficult terrain [to fight from/in]; and

5. national support: bond with a country, operate in secrecy in order to gain acceptance.

Additional material suggested that the Taliban doctrine accepted that there were several types of warfare:

1. military: conventional and well-organized war;

2. non-military: a guerilla-type hit and run war that weakens the enemy;

3. a war with *Rawayat Prasti*: a war using heavy weapons to destroy the enemy; or

4. a war without *Rawayat Prasti*: use bombs to weaken the enemy.

Clearly, the number of mining and IED incidents in Kandahar Province dramatically surged upwards in the first half of 2007. There was, however, the "dog that did not bark." The weapons employed by the insurgents remained the same as they had for years: PKM machine guns, AK-series assault rifles, RPG rocket launchers, 82mm recoilless rifles, and 82mm mortars. There were no thermobaric munitions, no anti-tank guided missiles, no man-portable anti-aircraft missile systems. There was specialized suicide IED terrorism, but there were also Pakistani-made anti-tank mines. The RPG launchers fired Chinese fragmentation and Pakistani High Explosive Anti Tank (HEAT) rounds. The 82mm recoilless rifle rounds were Chinese in origin. The free-flight 107mm rockets, always fired singly or in pairs, were Iranian, Chinese, and Pakistani, and no insurgent ever thought to piece together one multiple rocket launcher from the hundreds left over from the 1980s and 1990s for a "stonk" on KAF. It was as if some entity was keeping the technology level of the insurgents deliberately low and relatively deniable. Later it was learned that the main Taliban contact with the Iranian weapons supply pipeline, Mullah Osmani, had been killed in a December 2006 airstrike and this disrupted the logistics flow for some months.[60]

Photo Credit: Author

Photo Credit: Author

More and more enemy fighters arrived in the Canadian area of operations toting 82mm recoilless rifles equipped with Chinese 82mm anti-tank ammunition in an attempt to counter Canadian armoured vehicles.

At the same time, there was significant insurgent leadership from Afghanistan at the regional and local levels, and there were foreign fighters pouring into the south from all over the Muslim world. To what extent did Regional Command (South)'s theory that there were two separate tiers of Taliban hold? Was there, in fact, a less ideologically inclined Tier II Taliban fighter that could be "separated" from his hard-core Tier I? This was not clear. What was increasingly clear, however, was that the Director of Tribal Affairs in Kandahar Province believed that "many of the problems in Kandahar Province stem from the Panjpai tribes and that Ahmad Wali [Karzai]'s practice of offering a majority of political posts to Popalzai [tribal leaders] is creating a gap between the government and the people."[61]

Of course, that did not explain the existence of the Quetta Shura, nor did it explain the motives behind Al Qaeda's support for the insurgency's command body. Canadian analysts in Afghanistan generally stayed in the Afghan "lane" and did not get into the more strategic aspects of the global or regional conflicts. There was, however, consensus at TF Kandahar and Regional Command (South) that the Quetta Shura wanted to cut off all four major roads into Kandahar City, keep ISAF busy on the periphery, infiltrate the city and then destabilize it with the objective of swinging the population or otherwise intimidating it onto its side throughout the south. The Quetta Shura and its external allies were prepared to use all of these tribal disputes and local grievances as weapons in this assault.[62]

What could be said in 2007 was that there were steadily building community-level grievances against the district and provincial governments and particularly their security force protectors. There was also competition between power brokers in the province, some of whom were tribal leaders, and some that were not. Some of this economic competition was narcotics-oriented, some of it involved other activities, and all of it involved prestige and pride. These problems all overlapped. At the same time, there were entities in Pakistan that were willing to provide aggrieved parties in Afghanistan with weapons, training and other support—and to facilitate the intervention of outside allies in assisting them to play out their grievances. A veneer of religiosity was injected into this mix at the community level to legitimize action. This concoction was about to explode in everyone's faces in a hitherto quiet district called Arghandab.

New Fronts: The Origins of Operation ADALAT, March 2007

In January 2007, Mullah Naqib of Arghandab District looked at MEDUSA operations and, after some deliberation, decided that he would openly side with the Government of Afghanistan. The Canadians had by all accounts demonstrated strength and there was, according to Naqib's sources, serious division inside the insurgency, a significant indicator of weakness. Up to this point, Naqib and his militia permitted limited transit of insurgents through the district but would not permit them to stockpile weapons, recruit

or openly operate from bases there.[63] Now Naqib publicly encouraged the young men in the district to join the Afghan security forces or otherwise resist Taliban recruitment.[64] Naqib also accepted, again very publicly, reconstruction aid facilitated by the PRT, especially infrastructure upgrades.

Arghandab was vital ground. Fertile, prosperous, and sitting astride the Arghandab River, this district was the northwest gateway to Kandahar City. Arghandab's greenness contrasted with the drab wastes of Khakrez District, and the rocky hills of Shah Wali Kot to the north. The district was the city's "connective tissue" through Senjaray to Zharey District. In historical terms, those who controlled Arghandab became the kingmakers in Kandahar City. These facts were well known among the Afghans but not necessarily by all Western "players."

In late February, abnormally high water levels in the Arghandab River caused flooding and affected crops all along the river. The cause was traced by the PRT through its sources and resources to the Dahla Dam north of Arghandab. As soon as the PRT expressed interest in the dam, reports came in during early March that the insurgents were going to move into the area, believing that they would not be attacked by coalition forces out of fear the dam might be damaged or destroyed. Word also filtered out that the insurgents were interested in controlling irrigation for their purposes.[65]

From 8 to 10 March, reports flowed in that the Taliban were blocking the Tarinkot Road and were going to seize control of the former FOB Martello. Then word came in to the JPCC that the Afghan police fled the area after a number of contacts, which killed five to ten personnel on either side.[66]

9 Platoon from C Company was tasked to escort a combined intelligence and engineer team through Arghandab to the Dahla Dam. The purpose of the move was to "demonstrate coalition presence in Arghandab and Shah Wali Kot" and to assess the Dahla Dam from a security perspective. The team concluded that the insurgents could not materially affect the dam, as it was too robust.[67]

On 10 March 2007, Mullah Naqib and his family attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony at a bridge construction project. While departing the scene, the three-vehicle convoy of Corollas and Land Cruisers was attacked with IEDs, killing four and wounding ten. Two of Mullah Naqib's sons were killed outright, and the others wounded. Naqib himself was critically injured, taken to Mirwais Hospital and then medically evacuated to India.[68]

It was not readily obvious to all observers that the Taliban's moves in Shah Wali Kot and the Naqib "hit" were connected. Arghandab was not uniformly Alikozai and there were anti-Naqib factions in certain quarters. The idea that the attack was related to selective poppy eradication was mooted by PRT sources. Almost all Afghan security organizations independently believed that Naqib was targeted because of who he was and what he now represented.[69] Circumstantial evidence developed later pointed toward an Al Qaeda

linked or facilitated operation done on behalf of those in the Quetta Shura who viewed Naqib as a traitor.[70] The near elimination of Naqib's family in one fell swoop produced the possibility of a huge power vacuum that could have province-wide, possibly regional, implications if the insurgency got into Arghandab and took root. As Naqib's life hung from a thread, so did Kandahar's.

At first, it looked like the Afghans were handling the FOB Martello/Tarinkot Road problem on their own. Afghan police from Kandahar City, police from Mianishin, and even some mercenaries from Oruzgan called the "Kandak Amniante Uruzgan" (or KAU Security Battalion), closed in on FOB Martello and re-took it on 14 March. Then the road was cut again by insurgents operating from Mianishin District. It looked like "see-saw" action between the antagonists, but then information came in that the Oruzgan Highway Police were deliberately generating "drama" because they were competing with a U.S.-funded convoy security organization. The insurgent cells in the area were exploiting all of this for their benefit. The Shah Wali Kot police did not want to get dragged into what looked like a three-way fight so they stayed in the southern part of the district. The Canadian JPCC representative, Maj Craig Gardner, correctly asserted that "It remains unclear who is paying whom and for what exactly. Ground truth could prove to be the only manner to sort the Martello issue out."[71]

TF Kandahar undertook precautionary measures and sent Sperwer TUAVs into the area regularly after 20 March.[72] Regional Command (South), meanwhile, formulated Operation ADALAT and issued it on 25 March. ADALAT's creators understood the key role of Naqib and Arghandab, but were forced to situate and justify the plan in the context of ISAF HQ's over-arching plans NOW RUZ and OQAB, and then laud the success of ACHILLES and BAAZ TSUKA as part of the self-congratulatory lead-in. Regional Command (South) seemed to believe that what was going on in Arghandab and Shah Wali Kot was related to the enemy's inability to do anything else in other districts.[73] Canadian planners at TF Kandahar were more circumspect and wanted to know more about what was going on before committing to anything.

Operation ADALAT was hastily put together and not necessarily coherent, as Phase I operations had eight or more stages and the sequencing was unclear. Essentially, there was to be an information operations campaign while ISAF built a better picture of what was happening in the area. Then there would be a series of reconstruction and development operations in Shah Wali Kot and Arghandab supported by ISAF and the international community: one of these would be the Dahla Dam project. U.S. special operations TF 71 would disrupt enemy forces outside of those two districts, while the British special operations TF 42 would hunt leadership targets as they appeared.[74]

At this juncture, Canadian involvement was limited to the PRT and its efforts. Technically, Arghandab and Shah Wali Kot lay outside the ADZ in Kandahar. Yet it was unclear whether the ADZ strategy was still in play. As the situation deteriorated in spring 2007, Operation ADALAT would draw in more and scarcer Canadian resources while at the same time Canadian forces were dealing with increasingly complex operations in Zharey, Panjwayi and Maywand Districts. When he assumed command in May, Maj.-Gen. Jacko Page and Regional Command (South) essentially pushed Operation ADALAT to TF Kandahar.[75] TF Kandahar was then forced to examine ADALAT in light of its depleted resources.

Fortunately, a long-standing professional relationship between LCol Eyre and LTC Pat Mahaney dating back many years to a common Special Forces "Q" course brought TF 71 to the TF Kandahar table for Operation ADALAT. BGen Grant approved and planning commenced on a "just-in-case" basis.[76]

Canadian Involvement in Operation ACHILLES: March–April 2007

At the same time, 2 RCR Battle Group was warned that it would have to contribute forces for Operation ACHILLES. BGen Grant vehemently and quite correctly opposed the request for the deployment of a Leopard tank-LAV III combat team to the Sangin Valley, as it would open up Zharey and Panjwayi to the enemy again if the pressure in those districts was reduced.[77] The Canadian role in Operation ACHILLES, therefore, was to move into Maywand District and manoeuvre around it. This manoeuvring had two purposes: generate disruption to keep enemy leaders moving so special operations forces could target them as an adjunct part of the larger Helmand Province-wide operation, and to make contact with the rural population and district leadership for possible future operations there. LCol Walker, not happy with the possible reduction of combat power, formed a combat team from H Company and A Squadron for this purpose – and then was instructed to cut a pair of M-777 guns from D Battery to deploy all the way to FOB Robinson in Sangin. Canada had six M-777 155mm guns in Afghanistan and one third of them were cut away to support British operations in Helmand. At this time, the British army maintained seven regiments of artillery. Why the Royal Air Force could not have flown in a battery of artillery, let alone a pair of guns, boggles the imagination. Why TF Kandahar agreed to deploy scarce Canadian resources in such a fashion given the stressed Canadian situation in Kandahar is unclear but it was probably better to give up a pair of guns rather than a whole combat team.

The divergent approach taken by Regional Command (South) remains troubling. On one hand, Canada was responsible for handling the Kandahar ADZ. On the other hand, Canada was instructed to deploy forces to Maywand and Sangin, one in an area adjacent to the Kandahar ADZ, not in it, and the other in a different province.

Deploying combat logistics patrols to support operations in far-flung areas placed stresses on an already strained NSE, and, without access to helicopters, that placed each combat logistics patrol at risk of IED attack every time it made the trip to and from Helmand. The NSE noted that "The pace of operations combined with the op tempo continues to challenge us. Morale is high but soldiers are beginning to show signs of tiredness."[78] In time, TF Kandahar was able to acquire space on a CC-130 Hercules to move supplies to FOB Bastion in Helmand, where British logisticians ensured the Canadian guns were resupplied.[79]

That said, LCol Walker moved the "Hotel Desert Rats" combat team, led by Maj Ruff, out to Maywand District on 6 March where they linked up with Afghan National Army forces. (See Figure 1-3.)

Both groups would move their operations boxes for the next month. Maywand District is best characterized as a transit route on three axes. Highway 1 runs through the district, east to west, through the city of Hutal. The southern boundary of the district is the Arghandab River, with the Reg Desert south of that. An extended series of fertile communities called Band-e Timor runs along the north side of the river. North of Hutal is a south-to-north route through the Garmabak Pass, the site of the Battle of Maywand in 1880. The pass is the entryway into Ghorak District, which is the "back door" to the Kajaki/Sangin region of Helmand Province. Disruptive movements in the "box" were believed to generate enemy movement elsewhere given Maywand's "connective tissue" function between Helmand and Kandahar Provinces.

The combat team initially held a key leadership engagement at the Maywand District centre: over time, Maj Ruff learned that the main power broker they were trying to work with, Haji Saifullah, epitomized the complexities of the Afghan socio-political situation. Saifullah took money from poppy producers to shield them from Governor-led poppy eradication operations. Some of these producers were affiliated with the Taliban, others were not. The district chief of police's movements were leaked to the Taliban by the district leader with the hope that he would be assassinated and, as it turned out, every time the combat team moved in to conduct a sweep or cordon and search, the insurgents were warned ahead of time—by the district leader.[80]

Maj Ruff later learned that the Maywand District shura was staged and only included Taliban sympathizers or even Taliban leaders themselves. Once the combat team moved in, the Taliban established checkpoints and checked the cell phones of locals to ensure that they were not sending information to the police.[81] As a result, Operations HAMMER in the Band-e Timor area (17 March) and HOGAN (20 March) in the Sangbor area turned up little. When the combat team moved unannounced to an "ops box" near the Maywand–Zharey border during Operation HAROLD, however, the tank and LAV III leaguer took rocket fire for five straight nights, a sure indication that they were near some target of interest.[82]

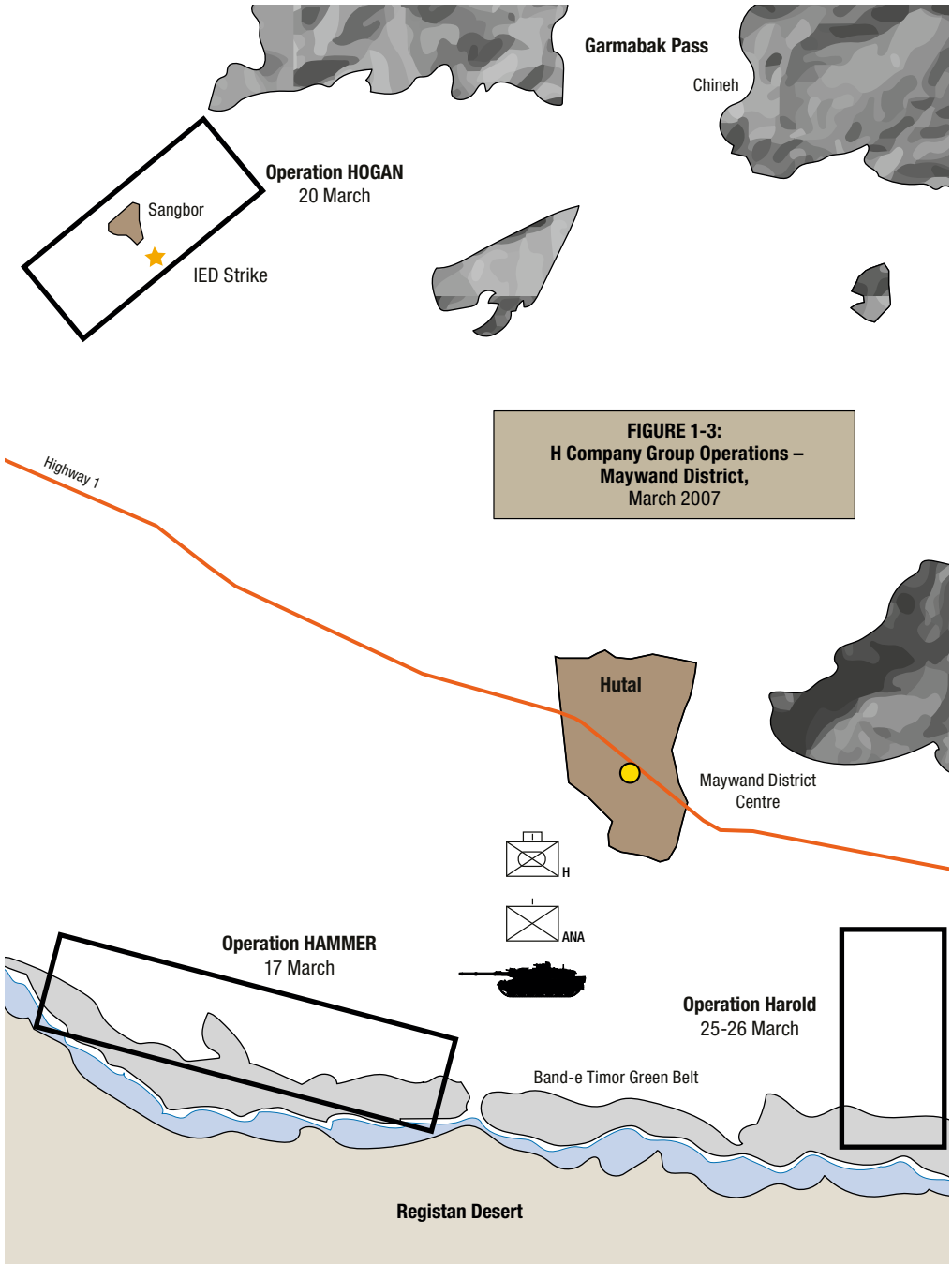


FIGURE 1-3:
H Company Group Operations – Maywand District,
March 2007

Figure 1-3: H Company Group Operations – Maywand District, March 2007

The battle group was pulled into more local politics when Afghan police that were engaged in poppy eradication near Sangbor took fire; one was killed and five were wounded. The provincial chief of police requested assistance from TF Kandahar, which then ordered the battle group to assist. Two groups of people engaged the police with small arms fire but were dispersed with an artillery show-of-force mission. Moving into the village of Baba, the police detained two people.[83] Like the diversion of Canadians to support British interests in Helmand, the decision by TF Kandahar to be involved with supporting poppy eradication, even to this limited extent, had the potential to cause problems between the local population and ISAF. Even though this was *in extremis* support, it could appear to local Afghans that Canadian tanks and LAVs were part of the eradication effort, which was taking away their livelihood. The fine distinctions Westerners placed on such things were not operable in this environment. What if these were corrupted police carrying out selective eradication on behalf of Haji Saifullah and the people firing back refused to pay bribes and were not, in fact, Taliban?

While Prime Minister Stephen Harper attended ceremonies in France commemorating the Vimy Ridge battle on Easter Sunday, 8 April 2007, a LAV III from 5 Platoon drove over a pressure plate IED southeast of Sangbor. The IED was set up to detonate under the troop compartment of the LAV when the front wheels contacted the pressure plate. The explosion killed Sgt Donald Lucas, Cpl Aaron Williams, Cpl Brent Poland, Pte David Greenslade and Pte Kevin Kennedy, all from 2 RCR, and MCpl Chris Stannix from the Princess Louise's Fusiliers. Four more soldiers were wounded. This attack was the largest loss of Canadian life in a single IED attack up to this point in the war. The sophistication of the attack, coupled with its timing, meant that the perpetrators were likely not "narcos" protecting their grow op.

The important take from the combat team's presence in Maywand was not the number of weapons seized or Taliban engaged. Maywand was a known staging and logistics area for the enemy. The more key leader engagements and shuras that coalition forces attended in remote areas, the more chatter there would be, and it was more likely that the higher level coalition kill-capture system could take those pieces of the puzzle and fill in the larger picture.[84] Knowing a particular target was not in a particular location allowed resources to be focused elsewhere. It is likely that, in some small way, H Company's and A Squadron's manoeuvres through the villages in the prairie-like Dasht in Maywand District contributed to the demise of Mullah Dadullah Lang and other primary enemy commanders. At the very least, the actions in Maywand provided a disruptive function vis-à-vis the enemy's logistics system feeding Zharey District. It also provided insight into the political dynamics of Highway 1 that influenced events in Zharey District.

Operations in Zharey District, March–April 2007

LCol Walker's planning for Zharey District focused on three areas. First, there was the removal of the Route Summit strong points. Second, any geographical analysis of the district demonstrated that the Gundy Ghar feature to the west was crucial for over-watch. Third, some means had to be found to garrison the district with police in order to establish security for the development effort. LCol Walker launched the first two initiatives in late February and then discovered that a Dutch infantry company would be joining the battle group for a limited time. He decided to place them in Strong Point West for the time being with the idea that this position offset enemy movements in the Sia Choy area. Recce Squadron and 42 Field Squadron checked out Gundy Ghar with the intent of establishing a patrol base there.[85] (See Figure 1-4.)

The idea that Afghan National Police would move in and occupy prepared checkpoints in the district appears to have come from the district chief of police Col Akka and the Zharey District leadership. As they explained to the Canadian commanders, a series of interlocking checkpoints at key intersections were an economy of effort tool as, they claimed, they did not have enough policemen for presence patrolling. The checkpoint plan, in the district leadership's view, demonstrated strength and resolve.[86] Having a grid of checkpoints would be disruptive to enemy movement and would facilitate coalition movement. Most importantly from a Canadian view, it put the Afghans in the forefront of the counterinsurgency effort.

The first test case was Gundy Ghar in March. After the engineers from 42 Field Squadron cleared it, the Afghan police established a compound there with a 20-man detachment. Coyotes and snipers from Maj Graham's Recce Squadron, on their way to moving in, were engaged in a complex ambush east of Howz-e Madad: small-arms and RPG fire from positions south of the highway were supported by a machine gun mounted like a Somali "technical" in the back of a Toyota pickup truck. Broken-down Jingle trucks were used to canalize the convoy's movement into a kill zone. The Dragoons shot their way out of the trap with their 25mm cannons and carried on to Gundy Ghar.[87]

Once established on Gundy Ghar, Maj Graham and his men worked with the Afghan police to establish a presence in the area. Two checkpoints were established: one at Routes Ottawa and Langley, and the other at Highway 1 and Route Edmonton. About 50 police manned these three sites and initiated patrol operations. In time, a Canadian Military Police detachment arrived and worked with the Afghan police for about a month and mentored them on how to handle vehicle searches and checkpoints. Within a month, contact with the population through key leader engagements led by the police produced a flow of local information on the location of enemy IEDs as they were emplaced.[88]

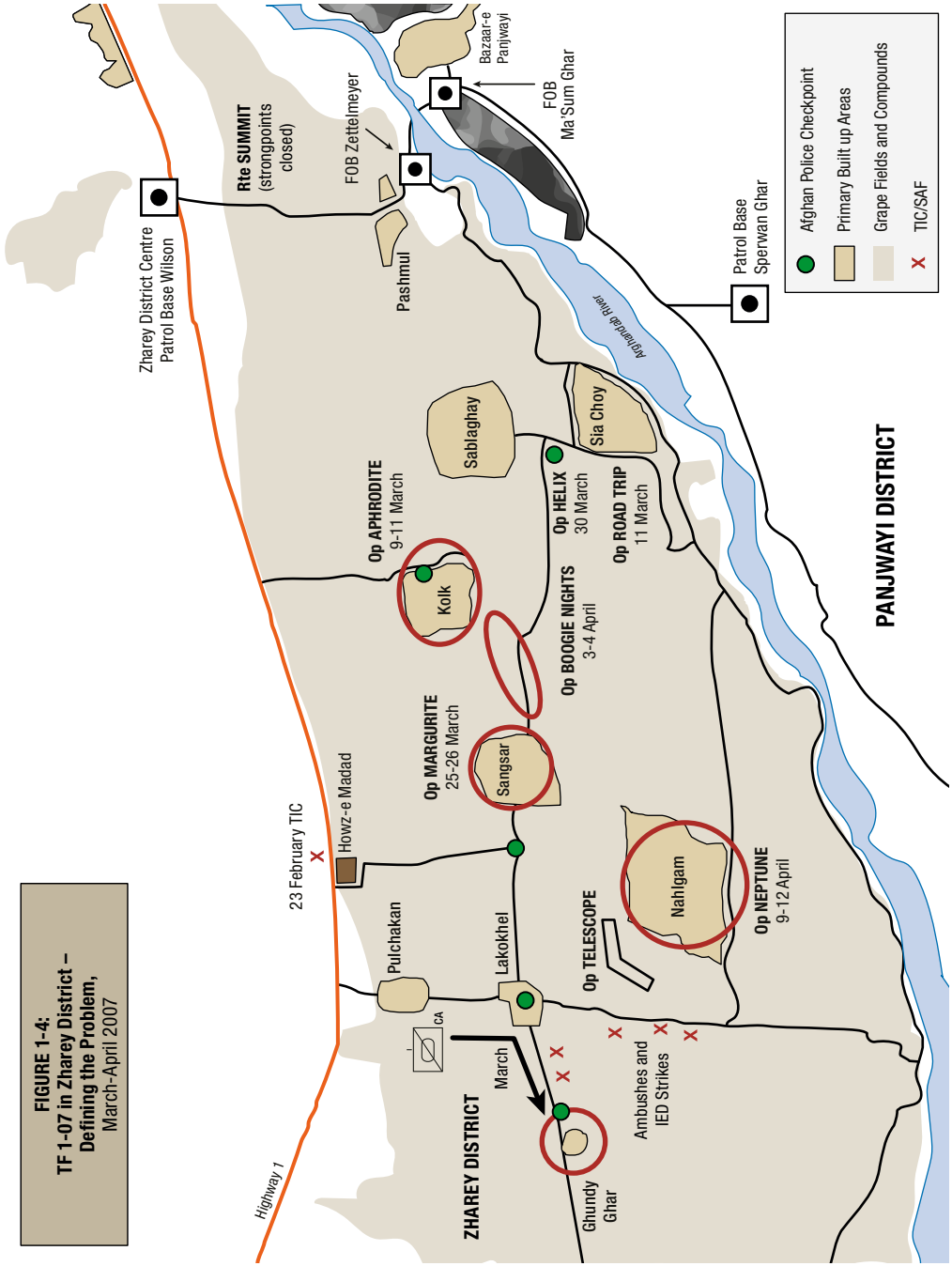


Figure 1-4: TF 1-07 in Zharey District – Defining the Problem, March-April 2007

Maj Quick's I Company initiated the patrol programme, working with the Afghan National Army and the OMLT while assisting with strong point removal. While patrolling around Musa Khan, an Afghan National Army vehicle struck an explosive device, which severed the legs of a young Afghan lieutenant. That night, a huge firefight erupted near Howz-e Madad, which drew in an estimated 100 or more Afghan police. Maj Quick, who was rapidly learning how business was conducted in Zharey District, reported that those shooting at Akka's police were "in fact civilians who had taken up arms due to their opposition to poppy eradication." Quick recommended that the battle group not intervene.[89]

Photo Credit: Author

This Coyote recce vehicle belonging to Recce Squadron struck a stack of TC-6 anti-tank mines (not an improvised explosive device) while on patrol in Zharey District. The vehicle flipped end over end, throwing the turret off and killing two Canadian soldiers. Medics and engineers who worked on and around the burning vehicle took heroic measures to extricate the crew.

The next checkpoint scheduled to go in was at Kolk. A deliberate operation consisting of I Company, 42 Field Squadron, Afghan National Army and mentors, plus Afghan police and CIVPOL from the PRT would move in, clear the ground, establish the checkpoint, bring in the police, and withdraw. Operation APHRODITE lasted from 9 to 11 March without incident—almost. Right after the Canadians and the Afghan National Army withdrew, the police came under contact west of the Kolk checkpoint. When the police

arrived to withdraw their wounded, they were ambushed. A LAV III from Maj Quick's tactical headquarters returned 25mm fire and then the enemy escalated and manoeuvred to flank the position. The rest of the platoon arrived and deployed as the population of Kolk fled to the east. The enemy withdrew.[90] Clearly, the insurgents found the checkpoint concept an impediment to their endeavours.

Operation ROAD TRIP was designed to establish a police presence in Sia Choy and was structured like APHRODITE using Canadian infantry from I Company, an Afghan company from 2nd Kandak with Canadian mentors, and police from Zharey District. The Afghans cleared the objective, the Canadian infantry provided a security cordon, and the police with Canadian CIVPOL from the PRT accompanied by a psychological operations team talked with the local leadership. 42 Field Squadron cleared the ground and established the checkpoint. In the middle of ROAD TRIP, however, Akka redeployed the police on poppy eradication duties elsewhere, which threw off events.[91]

Working alongside Akka and his lieutenants gave the Canadians better insight into what was happening in the district. Akka did not in fact get along with the district leader, Haji Khairuddin. Khairuddin was related to, it seemed, everybody in the district and that included several Taliban commanders. Akka was afraid of Khairuddin.[92] Although Akka outwardly favoured establishing the district's interior checkpoints, he remained focused on Highway 1 checkpoints where the bulk of his manpower was located. This was by no means altruistic though it was collaterally supportive of ISAF efforts to keep the road open: Akka, like Haji Saifullah and others, used Highway 1 as a revenue generator. Police loyal to local power brokers commonly extracted a "toll" from civilian vehicular traffic and split the proceeds with those allied to them.

Habibullah Jan, Member of Parliament and the power broker in Senjaray just down the road did the same thing. Jan and Akka were not on good terms, however, because Akka's patron, Ahmad Wali Karzai, did not get along with Habibullah Jan. Jan's patron was Yunis Qanuni, a Hamid Karzai rival in the Kabul arena (see Volume I). When insurgents arrived and operated out of Senjaray later in the tour and nearly shut down Highway 1, it was unclear whether they did it with Habibullah Jan's consent or not.

Then Akka disappeared for a time, leaving a deputy in charge. As it turned out, Akka and many of his men went off to participate in poppy harvesting elsewhere. This led to a power play by Khairuddin, who "in essence hijacked the Afghan police as his personal bodyguard and is using this as a tool to gain superiority over the regional elders." Khairuddin then started leading poppy eradication missions with "his" police. It was "possible that he is involving himself in the extortion of poppy farmers in exchange for sparing their crops."[93]

That was not all. LCol Chamberlain was pushing out CIMIC patrols from the PRT in order to provide remediation for battle damage caused during Operation MEDUSA. The plan was to continue with quick impact projects and cash for work whereby locals would be paid to fix their own dwellings and facilities, while larger infrastructure projects would be handled through the District Development Assembly and tendered out. In a shura conducted by Governor Asadullah Khalid, Zharey people complained that Khairuddin was "corrupt and biased in distributing food aid and rehabilitation assistance and that outsiders were receiving some of the contracts or cash for work intended for the people of Zharey."[94] Khalid outwardly mouthed support for the people but did not remove Khairuddin.

Right after closing the window on remediation for damage caused to land and buildings, the PRT was inundated with claims for damage to the local irrigation system caused by the construction of Route Summit in 2006.[95] LCol Chamberlain and the PRT CIMIC teams worked tirelessly on the problem and over time convinced/forced the district shura to formulate a solution with the local people. Not all were satisfied but it became difficult to determine who was skimming and double-dipping and who was not. CIMIC was sent back time and time again to verify who received funds, who did not, what work had been done and so on, but the upshot was that legitimate and illegitimate grievances continued to build in and around Route Summit—and Khairuddin's corruption and Akka's "policing" on Highway 1 aggravated the situation.[96] When Route Summit was cratered with explosives later in the season, it was not clear exactly who was doing it but many suspected it was a money-making scheme to get the CIMIC teams to pay out cash for work to fill in the holes using local labour who would, in turn, kick back to the power brokers.[97]

At the same time, the security situation on Highway 1 seriously deteriorated in the vicinity of Zharey District all the way to the western suburbs of Kandahar City. There were two convoy ambushes on Highway 1 on 6 and 17 March, while there were five additional IED attacks on combat logistics patrols, British convoys, and even LCol Walker's tactical headquarters over the course of a week: one of these resulted in the loss of a Heavy Equipment Trailer which had a disabled LAV III on it. A suicide attack against the counter-IED team's Bison on the 17th killed two young Afghan girls.[98] A Canadian disposal team also found a hoax IED on Route Summit, which was likely a warning from locals, as opposed to Taliban action.[99]

Recce Squadron, meanwhile, was operating from the Gundy Ghar feature with the Afghan police. Disturbingly, the police kept uncovering radio-controlled IEDs on Route Langley. Then Recce Squadron took a hit when a Coyote traveling down Langley hit an IED, blowing its wheels off. The engineer LAV coming in to assist rolled while manoeuvring,

so the members from 42 Squadron dismounted with a K-9 team to clear the area. The dog then triggered an anti-personnel mine and died, while the handler and a combat engineer were wounded and had to be evacuated by air.[100]

Maj Graham and his men tried to use local pattern of life to see which routes the locals avoided, but it was evident that "the impact of children being killed in the manner in which they were does not have the same impact here as it would back home in Canada."[101] Despite the mine threat, Recce Squadron continued to roll out and conduct vehicle checkpoints with the Afghan police in and around Gundy Ghar and on Highway 1. Snipers were set up at night to try and catch mine layers, but another Coyote hit an IED on Route Langley on the 20th. The explosion was massive and threw the vehicle onto its side, knocking the whole crew unconscious.[102]

Maj Graham and LCol Walker had intelligence that the problem lay in Nahlgam, to the east of Gundy Ghar, but it was nestled amongst irrigation ditches, walled roads, grape field trenches and compound complexes. Instead of just blasting their way in, the battle group established Operation TELESCOPE to target the IED makers and clear Route Langley. The battle group requested additional Predator, TUAV and other ISTAR coverage. Recce deployed four observation posts, then the next day a route clearance package rolled down Langley. At the same time, I Company focused its efforts on dismounted insertions, feints, and layback patrols in Siah Choy, Pashmul, Kolk and Sablaghay.[103] C Company was also brought in: it had a separate but supporting operation, MARGURITE. That task was to work with the Afghan National Army to establish a police checkpoint in Sangsar, similar to the earlier operations.[104] Having all three organizations moving simultaneously in Zharey District would not only act as a large "manoeuvre-to-collect" operation, it was also large enough that it might force the insurgent's hand.

The Afghan police refused to remain in Sangsar, however, even after C Company and the Afghan National Army cleared the area. The additional UAV coverage, however, netted the locations of mines and IEDs on Route Edmonton—including the location of an anti-tank mine stack.[105] When exploited, the combat engineers discovered that these were "[anti-tank] mines of Pakistani origin."[106] These were not "improvised explosive devices": these were purpose- built weapons, employed in a conventional fashion and emplaced by trained personnel.

Operation TELESCOPE's observation posts engaged an enemy early warning spotter and a four-man team equipped with RPGs with sniper and 25mm fire on the night of 28 March while D Battery fired illumination. The American route clearance package then made its way down Langley the next day but was subjected to a complex ambush including six RPGs and more Pakistani anti-tank mines. Artillery was called in.

LAVs and Coyotes returned fire with their 25mm cannons, and the snipers up on Ghundy Ghar started taking out targets with their Timberwolf rifles. An estimated 25 enemy were killed in this engagement, but other reportage suggested 11 enemy dead.[107]

The Sperwer TUAVs were by now observing considerable activity in Recce Squadron's area of operations and the other systems were collecting more and more data. Over in Diwar, I Company discovered that the Afghan police checkpoint was abandoned and had been destroyed by the Taliban. This was, in Maj Quick's view, a serious challenge and had to be rectified. I Company worked up a plan to re-establish control of the Kolk area.[108]

Recce Squadron continued with Operation TELESCOPE II. Another ambush against Recce Squadron's observation post near Nahlgam produced four more enemy dead with no casualties to Recce. Within 24 hours, another ambush on Langley resulted in seven enemy dead, with no casualties or damage to Recce. Maj Graham pushed into Nahlgam with the Afghan police and detained two men. ISTAR reportage confirmed that one of them was a Taliban commander, Abdullah Akim, and the other was a known bomb maker. In the days after their seizure, local leaders from Nahlgam made their way to Ghundy Ghar to discuss having more government security in their community. The situation in the Gundy Ghar/Nahlgam area calmed down for a time.[109]

H Company was brought into the action in Zharey from Maywand on 30 March. The target of Operation HELIX was a compound complex north of Sia Choy. With the Leopard tank squadron on the periphery, H Company went in with an Afghan National Army company and a platoon's-worth of uncoordinated Afghan police. The Afghans hit a pressure-plate IED on the way out, but gunshot residue tests conducted on two suspects came up positive. The Afghans identified one as a Taliban leader and packed him off to the National Directorate of Security.[110]

The I Company operation to get back into Kolk–Sangsar area was Operation BOOGIE NIGHTS, conducted on 3–4 April. After much planning, however, there was no contact so Maj Quick mounted several platoon-level presence-and-clearance patrols in the area.[111]

The 2 RCR Battle Group staff then assembled Operation NEPTUNE. This time the target was Nahlgam, where the Afghan police were to establish a checkpoint. This involved route clearance down Route Ottawa, followed by Recce Squadron deploying to the east, while the main effort based around I Company started from the north. This time, however, 42 Field Squadron had to improve the routes from other points on the periphery of Nahlgam before the forces could even deploy to get into the area. Bridge construction and culvert improvement, done with local input and cash for work labour, smoothed the path in. Recce Squadron left a patrol behind to watch Route Langley.

This was followed up with I Company night patrolling, which proved hazardous as there were uncovered wells in the area. One soldier fell in and had to be extricated. The patrols had a noticeable psychological effect on the population. While dealing with local leadership, I Company uncovered economic and political linkages between Nahlgam and Sangsar and determined that the people in Nahlgam believed that their shura representative lived in Kandahar City. There was what amounted to a whole parallel power structure in Nahlgam unconnected to the district structures. Unlike other areas of the district, Nahlgam was fastidiously clean and "heavily fortified." An excavator had been used to develop positions and create obstacles to limit vehicle movement.[112]

The Afghan police were delayed, so the decision was made to rotate the Recce Squadron patrol on Langley on 10 April. The deploying replacement patrol then hit a multiple-stack anti-tank mine on Route Ottawa. A QRF consisting of engineers and medics deployed. Then the returning patrol's lead Coyote hit another mine stack. This flipped the vehicle end over end, throwing the turret off, with the crew inside. The engine landed on the driver's hatch and the whole mess erupted in flame. The engineers, directed by MWO Richards, moved a Badger armoured engineer vehicle in to remove the engine and other debris off the top of the vehicle, while Cpl Dave Gionet, Pte Shane Dolmovic and Pte James Renaud worked valiantly to save the lives of the seriously wounded crew. Cpl Gionet nearly expired from inhaling fumes while inside the burning vehicle. Unfortunately, MCpl Allan Stewart and Tpr Patrick Pentland succumbed to their injuries.[113] It was later determined by the counter-IED team that the attack employed non-metallic TC-6 mines, double-stacked. A nearly undetectable purpose-built conventional weapon provided to the insurgents by an outside party killed them, not an IED.[114]

During the course of the operations that evening, Recce Squadron discovered that the Afghan police checkpoint at Routes Ottawa and Banff near Sangsar was destroyed after its patrol had been engaged with the mines. The police fled. To make matters worse, LCol Walker's tactical headquarters was struck by a suicide vehicle-borne IED in almost exactly the same location west of Kandahar City that the TF Orion tactical headquarters had been hit in July 2006.

I Company prepared another operation into Nahlgam called MULLAROUGE with battle procedure initiated on 15 April. MULLAROUGE was postponed, however. Canadian SOF developed a target and I Company was shifted to support Operation GRIZZLY, conducted near Route Saskatoon. A LAV III struck a mine while returning to Patrol Base Wilson, disabling it.[115]

MULLAROUGE transformed into HURRICANE. LCol Walker desperately wanted to get back into Nahlgam and shake the place up after the attacks on Recce Squadron. Recce Squadron was, by this time, relieved of the Gundy Ghar feature task and preparations

were made to redeploy on new taskings. Contingency operation HURRICANE was postponed on 30 April, because there was no route clearance package available for the operation—and Canada did not yet possess one.[116] The 2 RCR Battle Group, however, recocked to seize the initiative in early May.

What did all of this mean in a larger sense? LCol Walker's battle group was, quite correctly, working alongside the Afghan National Army and police to establish sustained presence at key locations in the heart of Zharey District and moving away from being pinned into fortifications in the eastern part of the district. Ideally, each of those presence "nodes" should have transformed into small security zones that, when connected, would permit the deployment of PRT projects into those communities and the connection of those communities with the Zharey governance system. As the battle group progressively learned, however, the police were unable to do more than hold some of their checkpoints. The Zharey governance system was completely ineffective and actually generated more grievances than it solved. The 2 RCR Battle Group was able to sustain a disruptive presence in Zharey District, but until the population was connected with a government that worked for them, nothing would change. Zharey District in early 2007 was, in effect, a microcosm of the entire coalition effort in southern Afghanistan.

Operation ROCKETEER

Recce Squadron was on the receiving end of a 107mm rocket attack on the Gundy Ghar feature in March and by early April there had been three such attacks against FOB Ma'Sum Ghar. The rocket problem in Zharey District mimicked the rocket problem around KAF. The enemy rocketeers essentially set up a portable self-launching, self-targeting stand-alone attack system and walked away from it. Unless they were interrupted in the act of transporting or deploying the system, they were not going to be apprehended or otherwise neutralized. There was also an insurgent mortar team sporadically operating in the district: it lobbed rounds at FOB Ma'Sum Ghar in late March. Without accurate flight data, it was next to impossible to target the baseplate with D Battery's M-777 guns.

Maj Jake Galuga's 42 Field Squadron set out to reinforce accommodation facilities in the forward operating bases and shore up defences as an interim measure. On 17 April, a Surveillance and Targeting battery was formed to address the threat in a more systematic fashion. Led by Maj Kyle Little, STA Battery grouped several Lightweight Counter-Mortar Radar detachments with a Hostile Artillery Locating (HALO) sound-ranging system, and eventually the small UAV system that had been discarded by Recce Squadron.

In effect, STA Battery tried to create a web of sensors over Zharey District so that enemy indirect fire units could be targeted with systems that confirmed the enemy's location, in order to reduce collateral damage from the 155mm artillery. This system of

systems worked actively against mortars, and passively against rockets in that data could be built up on point of launch origins and then those areas placed under surveillance either by patrols, snipers, Coyotes or Leopards.[117]

There were limitations, however sensitive HALO's microphones were. The terrain was mountainous which reduced the number of sensors that could be deployed: each sensor had a battery and could be useful to an IED maker if seized. The system was so sensitive that it recorded every explosion, including IEDs and artillery rounds.

Photo Credit: Author

The hostile artillery locating or HALO system was deployed to Forward Operating Base Ma'Sum Ghar as part of a web of sensors. The system, which employed sensor posts and a processing system mounted in an armoured command post vehicle, proved so sensitive that it was able to confirm the locations of improvised explosive device detonations. Below is a heavy equipment transporter rented from the Dutch Army.

Two days after STA Battery arrived, the battle group mounted Operation ROCKETEER. This four-day operation brought STA Battery, part of Recce Squadron, and the TUAV unit together to monitor likely rocket launch positions. The operation netted no insurgents but likely had a deterrent effect as no rockets were fired at Ma'Sum Ghar. The only casualty was a TUAV that was "pillaged" by the local population when the machine inadvertently auto-recovered. All was quiet until 14 May when an incoming 107mm rocket struck the shower area at Ma'Sum Ghar, killing an interpreter during his ablutions. After a series of patrols, there were no more rockets until June when a cluster of three struck the camp with no damage.[118]

Like the situation at KAF, rockets were a nuisance, but they could be a deadly nuisance. Despite its limitations, STA Battery was a prototype for a much more involved and more effective surveillance system later in the war.

Panjwayi District, March–April 2007

The situation in Panjwayi District remained relatively stable compared with Zharey. Maj Henderson's C Company tended to patrol in and around Bazaar-e Panjwayi when it was not deployed over in Zharey supporting one of the named contingency operations putting in Afghan police checkpoints.[119] In late March, American special forces and their associated Afghans redeployed out of Panjwayi District, which altered coalition operations there drastically. C Company moved to FOB Sperwan Ghar, which already boasted a pair of D Battery's M-777s, to take over from the American SOF on 28 March. The main problem now revolved around the already established security force checkpoints along Route Fosters, extending from Bazaar-e Panjwayi west to Mushan. The police did not want to man them because they did not have enough heavy weapons. The soldiers of part of an Afghan National Army kandak, who manned some of the positions, were tired of being used as point security and were itching to operate alongside the Canadian battle group as the other Afghan National Army forces were. As a result, C Company took up residence in some of the checkpoints in early April.[120] From here on in, a substantial amount of Canadian energy went into finding Afghan forces to occupy and maintain the Fosters checkpoint line. As it stood mid-month, a Canadian platoon occupied checkpoints 5 and 10, the Afghan National Army held 1, 1A, 3 and 3A, and the Afghan National Police handled 6, 7 and 8 (see Figure 1-5). Companies from 1-209 Kandak at this time tended to be the primary Afghan National Army force in Panjwayi District with a company in the Bazaar-e Panjwayi area, one in Ma'Sum Ghar, and another spread out along Route Fosters.

In time, Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar housed a Canadian infantry company, an Afghan infantry company and Canadian mentors, part of a Canadian artillery battery, a detachment of Afghan National Army artillery and part of Recce Squadron.

C Company had additional problems. Whenever Canadian SOF came into Sperwan Ghar to conduct an operation, C Company had to pull back forces for forward operating base security and to act as a QRF if the special operators were "Blackhawk Downed."[121] A high vehicle off road rate for its RG-31s meant that the company was increasingly footborne, which limited its reach along Fosters, let alone the rest of the far-flung district. Then "police" of some variety initiated poppy eradication in the district. The JPCC was unaware who they belonged to or who initiated the operation. Patrols into the Talukan area confirmed this—and also that the locals were not happy.[122] At the same time, the commanding officer of the Afghan National Army in Panjwayi District informed

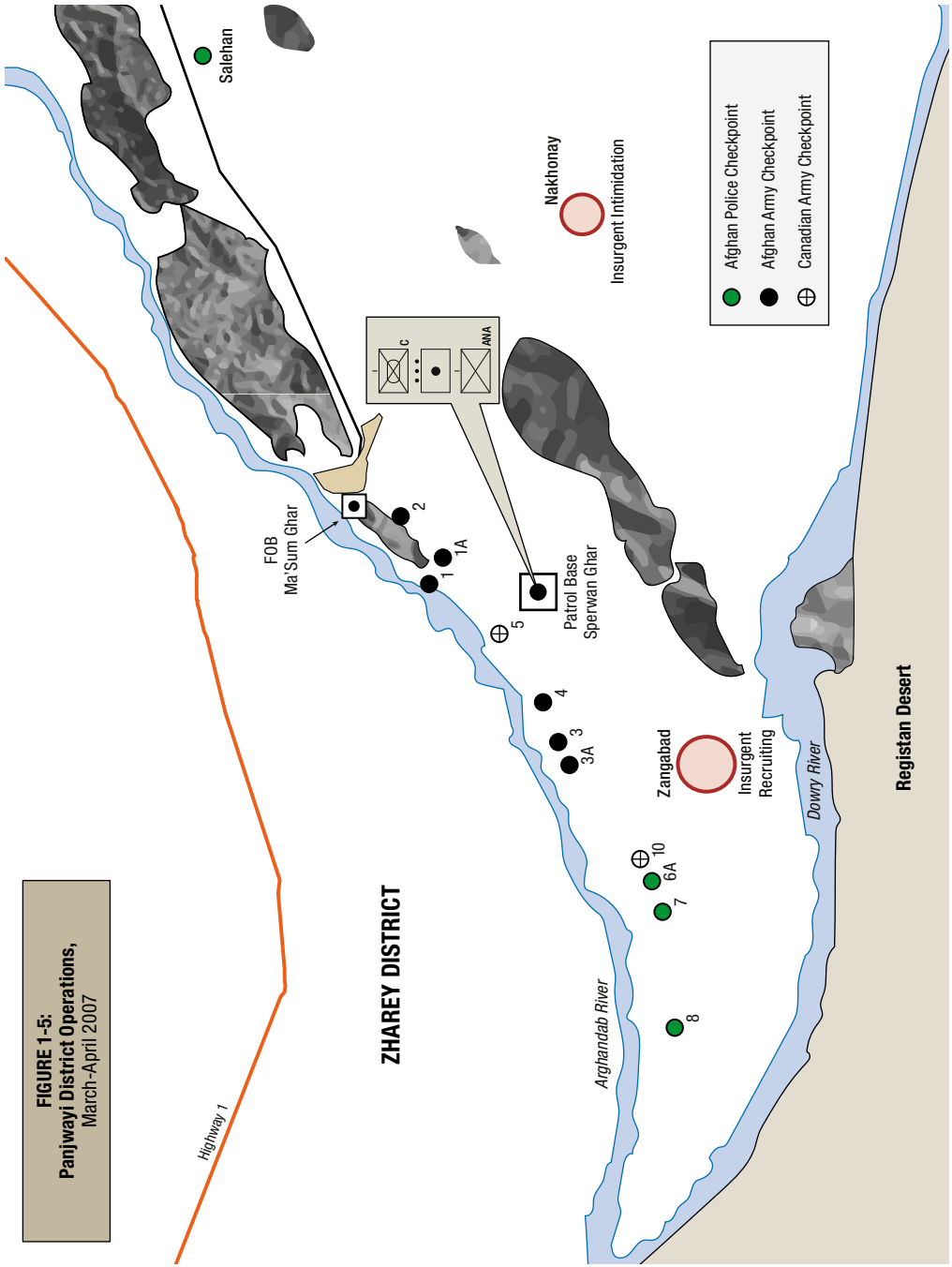


Figure 1-5: Panjwayi District Operations, March-April 2007

Photo Credit: Author

In time, Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar housed a Canadian infantry company, an Afghan infantry company and Canadian mentors, part of a Canadian artillery battery, a detachment of Afghan National Army artillery and part of Recce Squadron.

LCol Eyre at the OMLT that "the local population in Panjwayi is frightened of Canadian soldiers occupying check-points" and that "they were going to leave the district and return to Kandahar City." Moreover, the local population apparently "have more trust in the ANA as they can talk directly with them… and fear being caught in the crossfire as the Taliban attack the Canadians. They have recent memories of collateral damage caused by excessive CF firepower. They are also upset with the ANP stealing from them."[123]

Maj Henderson and his soldiers were, however, able to make limited contact and conduct key leader engagements in the population centres around Sperwan Ghar, which, in turn, brought increased PRT CIMIC coverage. One issue that caused local distress was the improvements to the Routes Brown–Fosters intersection. In the run-up to poppy season, people in Zangabad believed that the road construction diverted water away from their crops with a subsequent loss of livelihood. They wanted compensation similar to the Route Summit compensation they heard about. Then an individual named Haji Baran approached the PRT about implementing a similar situation in Sperwan, claiming to represent displaced Noorzais who wanted to come home. He helpfully pointed out that Route Brown should also be paved as soon as possible so that IEDs could not be emplaced on it. The Taliban, he said, were moving back into Talukan and Mushan.[124]

Photo Credit: Author

Bazaar-e Panjwayi facing east from Forward Operating Base Ma'Sum Ghar. Once the insurgents were pushed back and disrupted by Operation MEDUSA, development efforts undertaken by the Provincial Reconstruction Team took root in Panjwayi District's primary market town. The school to the right was a particularly successful project.

C Company's district challenges produced some creative thinking, but, unfortunately, little action. Maj Henderson suggested deploying Military Police from the PRT to work with Afghan police on Route Fosters checkpoints, or, at the very least, garrison Sperwan Ghar so his men could patrol and hold the two checkpoints. He even tried to establish some kind of training between C Company and the police. As Maj Henderson's soldiers were increasingly aware, the "police" were shaking down local people using the roads and if some kind of joint training could take place, it could "reduce rampant unethical and rogue ANP practices within the Peninsula."[125] That is, until concerns were expressed that it was out of C Company's purview to do so and the nascent programme was terminated.[126] There were still no replacements for the non-serviceable RG-31s and the crews of the observation systems saw people digging on the roads at night.[127] The Taliban were now reported to be recruiting in Zangabad itself. At the same time, night letters appeared in Nakhonay, in the eastern part of Panjwayi District and there was nothing that could be done as C Company was overtasked in the west.[128]

Attempts were made by TF Kandahar to get more police into Panjwayi. After much cajoling, Kabul pledged up to 400 special police to man checkpoints specifically "in order to free up [the battle group] and kandak elements for operations."[129] However, word came through OMLT sources that these policemen were going to be sent by Kabul to Lashkar Gah in Helmand.[130] Once again, a decision taken in Kabul directed resources away from Kandahar while Canadian and Afghan forces were hard pressed to protect Afghanistan's Second City. That decision might have been influenced by a concerted Canadian diplomatic-military effort, had the Canadian entities in Kabul been more willing to work together more effectively as a team.[131]

Operation SATYR NYX: The View from Spin Boldak

The problem of Spin Boldak, firmly pushed to the backest of all burners during fall 2006, re-emerged in spring 2007. Highway 4 remained a vital regional trade route with thousands of trucks a day passing along its mostly unpaved and pitted surface to meet up with Highway 1 in Kandahar and then either northeast to Kabul or west to Herat and points beyond. Recall that disagreements regarding tolls along Highway 4 back in the 1990s produced the Taliban militia in the first place when they were funded by Quetta merchants who were tired of having Afghans interfere with their trade.

In the most general sense, three things propelled renewed interest in having ISAF forces in the border city. First there was the need to intercept or otherwise interfere with Taliban supply lines from Quetta. Second the Government of Afghanistan was interested in tapping into the customs revenue stream from the Highway 4 border crossing and, finally, Canada was pursuing a possible UAE contingent Spin Boldak under ISAF's umbrella. This, in turn, would theoretically relieve the pressure on TF Kandahar's already over-stretched forces.

The UAE initiative had chugged along since summer 2006 but by April 2007, the situation was in some doubt. Regional Command (South) wanted forces in Spin Boldak but had virtually no idea what was happening in the area. Operation SATYR NYX was the product of this need. It was as if previous Canadian missions there had not existed: as we will recall, the PRT developed a relationship with Spin Boldak back in 2005, and TF Orion moved in a platoon temporarily in July 2006. There was sporadic CIMIC coverage during that period. 1 RCR Battle Group also sent a small recce team down with a PRT CIMIC patrol. However, TF Kandahar in 2007 essentially started from scratch.

Maj Graham was ordered to redeploy his squadron to Spin Boldak after Operation TELESCOPE and by 4 May, their initial recce reports were flowing in. Spin Boldak was unlike any other district in Kandahar. Some of the troops called it "Mos Eisely," after the rugged desert spaceport in the *Star Wars* film series.[132]

On arrival, Recce Squadron found a "Tower of Babel" of security forces. There was the Recon Company of 4th Kandak, operating with no logistic support from its parent organization. The Afghan National Police more or less wandered around the city of Spin Boldak but did not venture into the district communities. There, a Cheshire Cat-like National Directorate of Security commander told Maj Graham that "I am the intelligence chief: I know everything!" but did not cooperate with any other Afghan security force. Then there were two militias that had, during the DIAG process, transformed into the Afghan Border Police (4th Border Brigade) and the Afghan Highway Police, respectively. The Afghan Border Police was led by the legendary, some say infamous, Col Abdul Raziq, an Achakzai power broker, while the Afghan Highway Police consisted of Noorzai, led by Lal Jan. Raziq and Lal Jan reserved an unfathomable depth of hatred for each other. In essence, a U.S. Army ETT, a U.S. Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha, and DynCorp police trainers tried to work with all of these elements but had no coordination whatsoever.[133]

Photo Credit: Author

Recce Squadron moved to establish a presence at Spin Boldak and on the vital Highway 4 in 2007. Plans to replace Recce Squadron with a battalion-sized contingent from the United Arab Emirates failed to materialize and Canadian forces remained stretched thin in Kandahar Province.

Maj Graham's explanation to his successors remains a cogent piece of analysis: "Before we went we tried to learn the tribal lists and some of the historical background to Kandahar but it did not prepare me for what I encountered. The web of personalities within the district I worked was like a bad soap opera." The Afghan security forces each had official commanders, but they were mere frontmen as Raziq and Lal Jan actually ran the Border and Highway Police, respectively. The Raziq-Jan feud was family-based and went back far into the distant past. Capt. Azera represented the Afghan National Army; he was a Dari speaker from northern Afghanistan who hated all of the police and referred to them as corrupt Taliban sympathizers. All of the police forces hated him and the Afghan National Army and called them outsiders who did not understand the area. The National Directorate of Security commander, Gulam Rabbani, was a "fence-sitter" and played all sides. A Hazara from Logar Province, he remained aloof from the proceedings.[134]

On the political front, Graham and his men dealt with Obaidullah, who was Achakzai, and Haji Fida Mohammad, who was Noorzai. Haji Khaliq was a Popalzai brought in to mediate between them as the district leader, but as it turned out, Khaliq and Fida were friends who both hated Obaidullah. Obaidullah hated them and, being Achakzai, he was aligned with his friend Raziq. The security and political aspects of Spin Boldak were, in a sense, balanced—until entities introduced destabilizing elements. For example, a drug lord named Lalai started to make inroads in the drug trade in northern Spin Boldak, which prompted a response by the Highway Police; he was trespassing on their drug turf. District leader Khaliq provided Lalai and his forces with permits so they could be armed, which meant that the Highway Police had to back off.[135]

And there was the enemy, just to keep things interesting when the Afghan Border Police and Highway Police were not causing problems for each other. As it turned out, the Noorzais tended to look the other way when Taliban moved through the area. Kidnappings, night letters, and beatings occurred nocturnally in the outlaying border communities, but it was extremely difficult to determine what was Taliban activity and what was Achakzai/ Noorzai tribalism. ISTAR resources were able to localize authentic insurgent activity to the Lowy Kariz and Robat areas (see Figure 1-6) while a suicide IED cell kept feeding bombers into the city in order to kill Abdul Raziq, who had lost count of how many times he had nearly been killed.[136] According to Maj Graham's reports, the Pakistani ISI was "stirring the pot in all these rivalries."[137]

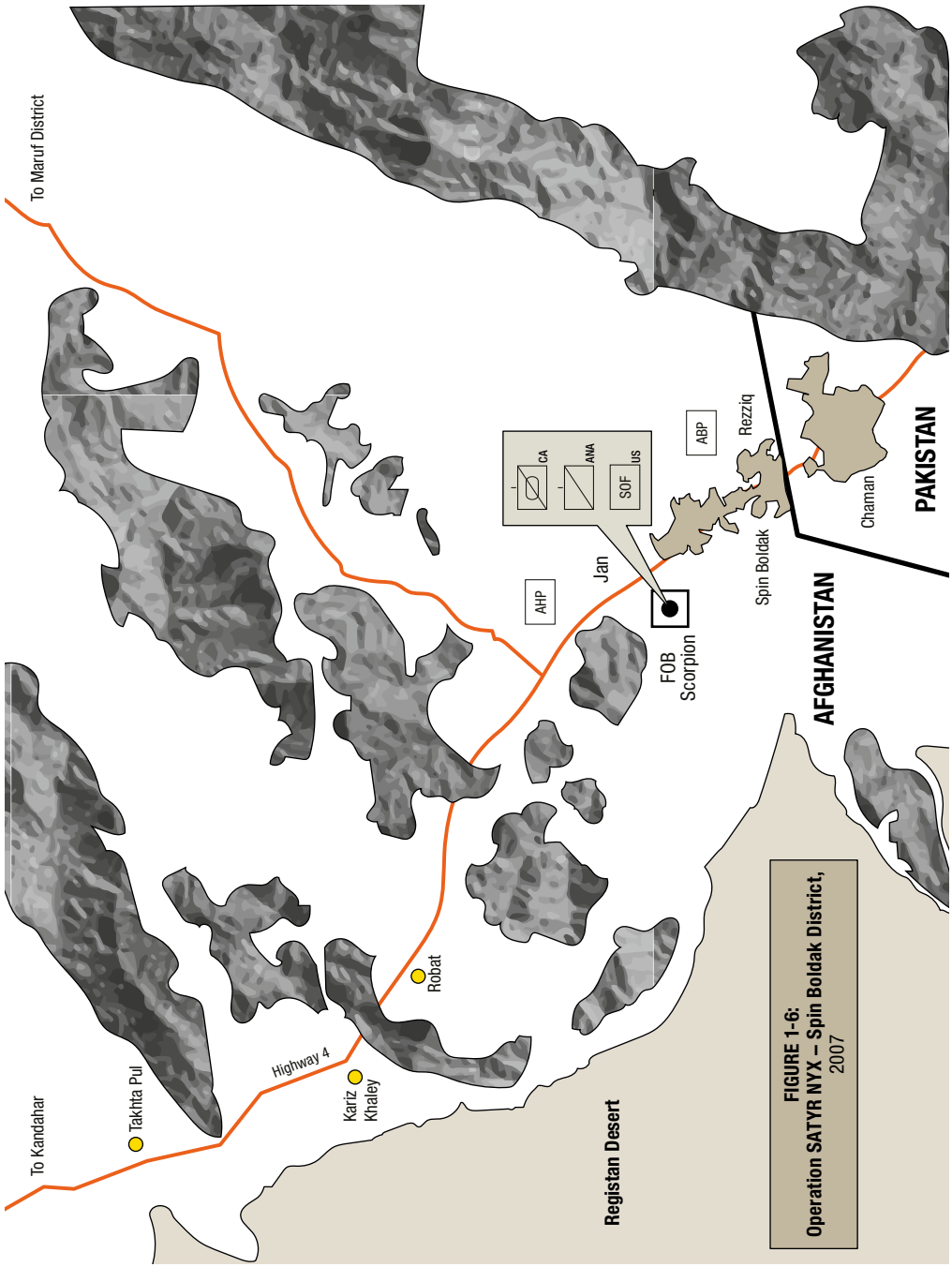


Figure 1-6: Operation SATYR NYX – Spin Boldak District, 2007

Maj Graham and his armoured soldiers were under no illusions as to the complexity of the situation and allocated over a month to figure out who was who. Recce Squadron divided the district up into six operations boxes and surged in with a CIMIC operator, Capt Geoff Marshall from the PRT and a PSYOPS team in tow for five-day periods to assess, collect, and conduct key leader engagements. Maj Graham wanted to shift to vehicle checkpoints and presence patrols in areas not covered by the Border Police but was forced to reduce this coverage when one full Coyote troop was pulled back to operate in Zharey.[138] The Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha tended to work in Maruf District but did not want Recce Squadron operating from its forward operating base: after some cajoling, they changed their minds. The Afghan National Army Reconnaissance Company was hard pressed to do anything, so Recce Squadron enabled it with food and fuel as best it could. The main issue was getting any two organizations to work together. Canada had focused ISTAR resources in the area so there was actionable intelligence. In some cases, it was acted upon. Recce Squadron also learned that the Border Police did conduct independent operations and these proved to be successful. In time, joint Canadian–Afghan National Army operations did take place in Shorabak District.[139]

Overall, Spin Boldak was a prosperous district and had little need for aid programmes. There was, however, tension between Raziq and the district leader: "My feeling is that every one of them is simply out for themselves and every one of them, with the exception of the ANA, will fight any change to the status quo, which has made them all wealthy."[140] And, with the relatively low level of violence in the district, that was not necessarily a bad thing in the broader schema.

Indeed, the Taliban did not want to make too much trouble in Spin Boldak because it would draw attention to its logistical routes and methodology. For the most part, insurgents could enter Afghanistan singly or even in small groups embedded as refugees, seasonal workers, or truckers. Weapons were smuggled into the country separately and married with their users much later on. Thousands of trucks moved through Spin Boldak per day and there were simply not enough resources available to search them all, and, when the heat was on in Spin Boldak, routes through Maruf, Registan and Shorabak Districts were used. For those who were more familiar with traditional war, the idea that a main service route could simultaneously coexist for the government and the insurgency could be a bit mind bending, but that was the uniqueness of Spin Boldak.[141]

From a TF Kandahar standpoint, however, Spin Boldak was a logistical problem. Re-supplying Recce Squadron spread the NSE thin, especially with concurrent operations in Helmand, Ghorak, Zharey, Arghandab and Panjwayi. Highway 4 was problematic, as only part of it was paved. This severely reduced combat logistics patrol speeds, which

"further expos[ed] the vehicles to greater danger" because it was easier to seed an unpaved road with IEDs than a paved one.[142] Once again, the lack of Canadian helicopters forced increased use of ground mobility, which increased risk. Recce Squadron started keeping track of IED statistics on Highway 4.

Why at this late date was Highway 4 not completely paved? It was, after all, a main service route and a regional trade route. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was funding road paving projects all over Afghanistan at this time. There was some debate, however, between CIDA and USAID as to who would fund Highway 4. In the end, CIDA wanted to pay for it and, with the USAID representative departing the PRT, they won out. CIDA used the Asian Development Bank as the implementing partner and allocated nearly $15 million to the project. On 22 April, a shura and ceremony was held in Spin Boldak, "marking the start of construction of the final 42 kilometer segment" of Highway 4.[143] Spin Boldak looked like a success story, with limited coalition input. Then a suicide bomber walked into Highway Police headquarters and detonated the explosives strapped to his chest. Lal Jan, the Highway Police commander and Noorzai power broker, was slain along with his son and 15 other government employees and security personnel. The planned deployment of troops from the UAE by this time failed to materialize.

This left Recce Squadron in Spin Boldak to work with the polyglot of U.S. Army and DynCorp police mentors, all four segments of Afghan police, and the Afghan National Army Recon Company with American embedded trainers stationed there. Of the four phases of Operation SATYR NYX, only the first, Shaping, could be accomplished with these resources, and there was no singular security force commander in Spin Boldak. The best that could be done was to mount ad hoc operations based on personal relationships. Maj Graham was a catalyst and once Col Raziq was identified as the key player in the district, combined operations centered on working with the Border Police. Similarly, the Afghan army Recon Company had a good relationship with Recce Squadron, so combining all three elements to work together was possible while the other police organizations conducted their financially-motivated framework operations on Highway 4. Numerous "manoeuvre-to-collect" operations successfully mapped the nature of illicit activity in the district.[144] The enemy and their allies in the Spin Boldak arena never tried to take on Recce Squadron and Recon Company. For the most part, they did not want to draw attention to ratlines that avoided the border observation posts. Instead, they laid IEDs to kill Afghans employed at the forward operating base. A 15-year-old biking to his cleaning job was blown in half by such a device in order to discourage people from working there.[145]

The Canadian Strategic Dimension

As we will recall, the Canadian government and the opposition parties voted in May 2006 to maintain Canadian troops in Kandahar until 2009. In April 2007, however, the political landscape in Canada changed. The New Democratic Party, led by Jack Layton, was against the Afghanistan endeavour from the beginning and had in the past advocated peace talks with the Taliban. The alleged movement of Canada away from its supposedly historic "peacekeeping" heritage ostensibly prompted Layton to demand on 16 April the immediate withdrawal of Canadian forces from Afghanistan. He once again demanded that the Karzai government initiate peace talks with the Taliban. As the Canadian government was a minority government, the possibility that Layton might achieve his aim of pulling Canada out of the war was very real. At the same time, the Dutch parliament was once again wavering and might lose its resolve if Canada withdrew. On 19 April, a motion was tabled in the House of Commons calling on the Harper government to confirm February 2009 as the withdrawal date. This motion was rejected at 150 to 134 votes. Layton was unable to force an early withdrawal, let alone confirm that Canada would withdraw in 2009. On 30 April, Layton then attempted to have the House of Commons "immediately notify NATO that we would withdraw from the war in Afghanistan." This was also narrowly rejected.[146]

The timing of this debate should be examined in light of concurrent enemy activity. For nearly two weeks (16–30 April), Canada openly debated continuing on in Afghanistan. This debate was available on the Internet as much as through other more traditional mediums. While in progress, there were no noticeable different enemy actions seeking to exploit the sensitivities of that debate; indeed, enemy activity dropped off.[147] However, the loss of eight Canadian soldiers killed and ten wounded earlier in the month (8 April and 11 April) apparently had some cumulative effect on Layton's decision when combined with the detainee allegations of late March. It remains a possibility that the mass casualty event on Easter Sunday 2007 was deliberately timed to influence Canadian policy as it related to Afghanistan. It is equally clear that "exposé" journalism on the detainee issue, based on what might have been information shaped or provided by Taliban sympathizers, also played a role in nearly ending Canada's war. It is equally possible that both events were part of a larger Taliban or Al Qaeda supported information operations campaign to knock Canada out of the war, much in the same way Spain was convinced to pull its forces out of Iraq.[148]

Taliban spokesman Qari Yousuf Ahmadi's comments are worth noting as he timed an interview to coincide with Canadian parliamentary debate over continuing the mission back in 2006:

> The Taliban feel confident Canadians are not resolved to see this mission through. As a campaign of suicide attacks and fatal roadside blasts intensify, the public will grow weary… We think that when we kill enough Canadians they will quit the war and return home.[149]

There is no reason to assume or believe that Taliban policy changed during the intervening 12 months.

A non-Canadian analysis of the situation encapsulated the domestic dimensions of support for the war in Canada at that time:

> The volatility in public opinion appears to stem from the positive and negative images that emerge from Afghanistan daily. Many Canadians are aware of some of the good news stories coming out of Afghanistan these days: school attendance (especially for girls) is up, refugees have returned in the millions, medical care is better and more available, GDP has doubled and infant mortality has dropped by a quarter, all against the haunting spectre of a strengthening Taliban. They are proud that Canada is part of these successes. There also appears to be a growing understanding in many circles that these types of missions are messy by nature and require patience… there is also a pride about Canada taking on a robust role in Afghanistan consistent with the idea that "Canada is back" on the world stage. But the negatives are hitting hard. The biggest and most persistent negatives are incurring casualties… each of which hits Canadians three times—when the death occurs, when the body returns, and when the funeral takes place…. Many Canadians wedded to popular mythology, have expressed the notion that the current Afghan mission is simply "un-Canadian" and gets away from the classic Canadian mission of post-conflict peacekeeping…. There is also a sense among many that Canada's share of the burden is too high and that there will be nothing dishonorable about pressing other NATO allies to step up to the plate.[150]

Counter-IED Operations

The evolution of Canadian counter-IED operations accelerated throughout 2007 as the problems encountered during operations MEDUSA and BAAZ TSUKA were progressively addressed. Initially there were several counter-IED activities that were not necessarily synchronized. There was a "long-term" six-man technical assistance visit that acted essentially as a Technical Exploitation Team dubbed TF IED Defeat. There were a handful of Canadians working with the American TF Paladin counter-IED intelligence organization and the Combined Explosives Exploitation Cell, both of which were transitioning from Operation ENDURING FREEDOM to ISAF. There were three Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams and their Bison-transported robotic team members that belonged to the battle group who were embroiled in "tribal" issues between the NSE, the PRT, and the battle group over who owned and could task them.[151]

In other words, there were several moving parts that were not meshing yet. TF IED Defeat was a "lessons-learned" organization that supported Canadian units in-theatre by collecting post-blast analysis data and recommending changes to tactics, techniques and procedures. The EOD teams could render safe devices. The "lab rats" were a Canadian contribution to an American organization. Counter-IED was seen at this point in time as a set of tactical and technical responses to an enemy technique.

When BGen Grant's TF Kandahar headquarters stood up and started operating, the decision was made to group most of the counter-IED resources under the Chief of Operations (in this case, LCol Tom Bradley): it was basically labeled "C-IED." The former technical assistance visit transitioned into several Technical Exploitation Teams and the EOD teams were taken away from the battle group and redistributed under brigade-level command. A pair of Canadians working with the Combined Explosives Exploitation Cell and the American counter-IED laboratory in Bagram Airfield remained detached, however, but the effect was that by 2007 there was a dedicated, and no longer ad hoc, counter-IED operations at the Canadian headquarters in Kandahar. A concurrent process back in Canada to consolidate counter-IED expertise was also in play to ensure deploying units were as up to date as possible.

And they had to be. The counter-IED war was an arms race, a war within a war, characterized by constant adaptation by an extremely agile and creative enemy. By 2007, the enemy employed a plethora of IED types. There were radio-controlled devices, which were command-detonated by a "button man." There were pressure-plate or crush-plate devices, which were essentially mines lying in wait for a victim to operate it. There were trip-wire devices, which were victim-operated, and command-wire devices, which were detonated by a "wire man." Suicide bombers came in two varieties: on foot or, when in cars, they became suicide vehicle-borne IEDs. That was in addition to purpose-built PMN anti-personnel mines and TC-6 anti-tank mines.[152]

The debate about how best to go after the enemy IED organizations was in full swing in 2007 but there was no consensus on an approach. For example, not all IEDs were created equally. Suicide IED activity was highly specialized, particularly because of the centrality of religion to it. It required a specialized network that essentially turned a human being into a cruise missile. Recruiting was conducted in madrassas in Pakistan, where fervent individuals were identified and indoctrinated. They proceeded after training to Kandahar where they were met by a facilitator, in some cases a religious figure, who ensured that the "weapon" was spiritually and mentally prepared, while another facilitator ensured that a bomb vest or car was prepared by an engineer. Man and bomb were mated and then deployed as the situation required it. It was the enemy's equivalent of a precision-guided attack.[153]

Photo Credit: Author

The enemy continued to use improvised explosive devices against Canadian vehicles and personnel. This is the remains of a LAV III destroyed by such a device in the process of being shipped back to Canada for analysis.

Other IEDs were more tactical in nature. The "roadside bombs" used in Zharey and Panjwayi Districts were harassment and route denial weapons. In some cases, they were laid like a traditional minefield to channel forces or deter them from entering key areas. On occasion, they could be deliberately employed for mass casualty generation when the enemy wanted to inflict psychological effects on Canada and her allies during crucial periods of political instability. A specialist bomb maker manufactured and emplaced these devices; they required secure "factory" space to build and procurers to bring material to them. In many cases, they scrounged the battlefield for unexploded bombs and shells. Illumination casings were converted for use against their previous owners. The enemy forces heavily infiltrated the non-governmental organization demining community to obtain military-grade explosives, while ISAF garbage dumps were rifled for batteries and electronic components. Car door fobs were a preferred detonator at one point, cell phones later on.[154]

To provide more insight into the problem, there had to be better connectivity between the counter-IED structure and the intelligence community. By summer 2007, improved links were established between the JTF Afghanistan counter-IED, the All Source Intelligence Centre and TF Paladin to move information. EOD rendered unexploded devices safe, while the Tactical Exploitation Teams collected the pieces of detonated weapons, analyzed them and conducted lessons-learned activities for units in-theatre and in Canada. EOD and Tactical Exploitation Team members were then combined and by late 2007, five counter-IED teams were formed.[155] The counter-IED war continued.

The Provincial Reconstruction Team and Development, April–July 2007

The PRT continued with its varied development activities, focusing particularly on improving the National Solidarity Programme organizations in the communities and districts. CIMIC remained deeply involved in divining just what was going on in each district and facilitated development programming to match new information as it emerged.

Finally, on 6 May 2007, ISAF headquarters ordered its subordinate commands to assist the Government of Afghanistan with the implementation of the ANDS. This was a major turn around given earlier NATO ISAF opposition to the creation of the ANDS in the first place back in 2004. It was probably the most important decision taken by Lt.-Gen. McNeill while he was Commander ISAF. The chasm between development and security efforts in Afghanistan was narrowed slightly, but enough so that the semblance of coordination at the Regional Command (South) level could occur. A Regional Reconstruction and Development Steering Group was established at Regional Command (South), which included the TF Kandahar Development advisor, the PRT Commander, the TF Kandahar CIMIC desk officer, and the TF Kandahar Engineer Cell. There they were lectured at length by USAID and informed that 95% of the effort should be non-kinetic and only 5% kinetic. Better messaging was important so that target audiences would know what was being accomplished, especially when anything was coordinated with the Afghans. The discussion was less than useful and the establishment of coordinated development at Regional Command (South) appeared to be just another layer of bureaucracy that had to be fed with data without any resources being provided downwards.[156]

The CIDA-mentored Provincial Development Committee organization was instructed to produce a provincial development plan so that money could flow from Kabul to the district and community development bodies. After some months, the development plan was examined by the PRT who acknowledged that it was probably the first such plan in Afghanistan but it remained "a non-costed and underdeveloped 'wish list' of projects which has little chance of coordinating or leveraging investments in the donor community."

There was no implementation plan and was, in effect, a "glorified projects list."[157] It was, however, a start, though it was dependent on other organizations to assist the Afghans at the district and community level. Those organizations themselves were in disarray throughout summer 2007.

The role of the PRT in "effects mitigation" for inadvertent civilian deaths, injuries and damage increased in 2007. This was, of course, CIMIC's traditional role in past conflicts but it took on new dimensions in Kandahar. Any accidental deaths could lead to serious grievances in the population against the coalition forces and Afghan government, which, in turn, would be exploited by the insurgency to gain recruits in the Pashtunwali-laden tribal environment. Each incident had to be handled quickly and expeditiously to avoid larger repercussions and this placed a premium on all influence means: public affairs, CIMIC and PSYOPS. An example was an incident in early May when TF 71 operators engaged what they thought was a suicide bomber trying to target their convoy in Maruf District. Thirteen Afghans died as a result. Supported by TF Kandahar, the PRT swung into action and arranged shuras between the Governor, the families, and local leadership—secured by TF 71 forces. A spirit of reconciliation was successfully generated, which completely defused the situation.[158]

Three days later, unfortunately, an American convoy moving through the city engaged and wounded six civilians. Then there was the "Phantom Convoy" incident where a convoy that no one could identify, not belonging to the blackest of the special operations forces nor any of the private military corporations, gunned down five people one night. No one knew who was responsible. Then a special operations forces operation on 16 June resulted in nine detainees and one civilian killed. This particular action finally put the population on edge when the family prepared a large-scale protest and the PRT, working with the Governor, was forced to intervene and prioritize a number of projects in the affected neighbourhood. The situation escalated again on 3 July when a British convoy, led by inexperienced personnel, shot 15 people out of fear of ambush. There was a general mobilization of the population by the city's religious leaders, so TF Kandahar and 205 Corps moved 250 Afghan troops and police into the city and brought in attack helicopters for over-watch which diverted troops from ongoing operations. Clearly, "escalations of force" could have disproportionate effects if not dealt with so the PRT was at the front line when it came to compensatory measures.[159]

Another important operation involving the PRT was Operation BISSEL. In a remote area northeast of the city was the ammunition depot for the former 15th Division of the Soviet-era Afghan Army. This huge facility consisted of numerous bunkers, and was surrounded by an estimated 10 000 anti-tank mines. Contracted deminers failed to do the

job properly, so, in 2004, the decision was made to bomb the facility. This merely spread the munitions around or buried them in the bunkers. The UN Mine Awareness Centre for Afghanistan (UNMACA) wanted to spend money and employ local deminers to get the job done, so the PRT got involved. The local organizations included the Demining Agency for Afghanistan and the Mine Detection Centre.[160]

Information came in through the PRT that the Taliban were either infiltrating the 15 Division site to remove buried explosives, or they were co-opting the deminers to hand over defused mines. This produced a larger collection operation involving Canadian resources, including Sperwer TUAVs, to monitor the site. Sure enough, people were seen to be moving through the minefields but it was unclear what they were doing exactly. At the same time, the Demining Agency and Mine Detection Centre offices were placed under observation. PRT engineers and special operations forces moved on the 15 Division site to assess it, while the Demining Agency and Mine Detection Centre offices were raided. Nine Demining Agency and two Mine Detection employees were implicated in selling ammunition to the insurgents: one person had links to a prominent Taliban commander in the city who frequented Loy Wala District and was involved in IED terrorism.[161]

At the same time, the UNMACA acted as a CIDA-implementing partner for demining activities in Zharey District and subcontracted their demining operations out to other organizations. When the Canadian engineers tried to develop a relationship and information exchange with UNMACA, UNMACA complained to CIDA, who complained to TF Kandahar. UNMACA personnel thought that contact with the Canadians compromised what they believed to be some form of neutrality and they refused to coordinate their movements with the 2 RCR Battle Group. The concept that their activities were in support of the Government of Afghanistan and paid for by the Government of Canada eluded them. This was but one example of a non-governmental organization undermining government authority by behaving as if it were neutral.[162] The more sinister conclusion here is that the Demining Agency for Afghanistan and Mine Detection Centre were doing the work for UNMACA, and this resulted in re-purposing unexploded ordnance and mines to be used against Canadian soldiers, with CIDA paying part of the bill. After the investigation was completed and this pipeline shut down, the Taliban kidnapped three Mine Detection Centre deminers in retaliation; the deminers were found murdered in early August.[163] These murders effectively shut down UNMACA operations in Zharey and Panjwayi.

The PRT was also involved with supporting special operations forces. One example involved Operation AQUA ORANGE, which included cooperation with the Polish GROM special operations unit that was operating in Arghistan and Maruf Districts. The PRT deployed an outreach team of CIMIC, PSYOPS and force protection to assess

the areas that the Polish SOF were operating in, much in the same way the 2005 iteration of the PRT worked with the French SOF in the same area. Attempts were made to get some development programming into Maruf to support the beleaguered population.[164]

Another aspect of the war in Kandahar was the increased number of kidnapping incidents in 2007 relative to previous years. In March, three Italians were kidnapped in Kandahar City. A special operations forces recovery operation handed the hostages over to the PRT Police, led by Col Tor Jan, and a PRT support team who assisted with medical care.[165] The Taliban then kidnapped medical personnel in Zharey District and transported them all the way to Sangin in Helmand for "trial" by a Taliban "judge." One of the hostages, a French citizen, was eventually released in Maywand to the Red Cross. Governor Asadullah Khalid decried the exchange policy, asserting that appeasement would lead to more kidnappings.[166]

When special operations forces in Helmand killed Mullah Dadullah Lang in May, the unusual decision to display his body for media scrutiny in Kandahar was taken by Asadullah Khalid. This resulted in severe public outrage. The Taliban kidnapped four Ministry of Health employees on 4 June, demanding that the body be released to the family. Khalid went on "medical leave" and handed this hot potato to his deputy, who declined to make a decision, which led to the beheading of one of the hostages. He then made an exchange deal.[167]

Mullah Dadullah Lang's body aside, this was part of a larger Taliban strategy to cripple the Afghan government's medical system. In the two weeks after the CIDA-funded polio eradication initiative was launched in July, 39 medical personnel were killed by the Taliban, followed by another wave of kidnappings.[168] Note that no Canadian media outlet or opposition critic made any reference whatsoever to the systematic murder of unarmed doctors, nurses and health care providers: more column inches in Canadian newspapers were devoted to the detainee issue instead of these heinous acts. Canadian SOF, their British and American counterparts and the intelligence apparatus were kept busy during this time looking for opportunities to recover any hostages, which, in turn, attenuated counter leadership operations against the insurgency.

UNAMA also found itself under attack. A UN vehicle was hit with a radio-controlled IED 1 kilometre south of the PRT, killing five.[169] The PRT's Quick Reaction Force responded to the incident, and, as the summer went by, PRT vehicles were targeted on three occasions, including LCol Chamberlain's RG-31. One attack involved a ball-bearing-laden suicide bomber that shredded an RG-31.[170]

The UN warned that if the violence against their personnel escalated, they would scale back operations in Kandahar. Note that the entire UN effort in southern Afghanistan was quartered in Kandahar, so its neutralization by the enemy had widespread effects in the region. Recall that the UN facilitated the vital Community Development Councils

in the districts so that reconstruction and development money could be made available at the community level. The UN sent in Guang Cong to fill the leadership vacuum in July. Cong's first move was to lecture the Canadians at the PRT about the need to avoid civilian casualties during ISAF operations and to "dialogue" with all coalition parties on that topic.[171] This was less than useful given the existing situation. The Red Cross announced in mid-July that they would pull out of Kandahar citing the security situation. A week later, one of the five major international development organizations, Oxfam, also pulled out.[172]

Supporting Task Force Kandahar Operations

LCol Chuck Mathé, the new NSE commander, oversaw a massive change in how service support operated in Kandahar. Mathé's NSE had significantly more guns, tanks and other vehicles to maintain and service so in work ups for Afghanistan in November 2006, the number of positions in the NSE abruptly grew from 269 to 481. This rapid increase brought in support personnel from every logistics unit across the armed forces, not just the Army. The nucleus of the NSE came from 2 Service Battalion in Petawawa, with the tank maintenance from Edmonton, ammunition handlers from Valcartier, and so on: they were also trained for a ground combat environment. The NSE was now finally playing catch up for the attempt to use Kabul as a template for Kandahar in 2005–2006 but many of the non-land force augmentees needed basic soldiering skills which in turn slowed down the deployment of nearly 40% of the NSE in spring 2007.[173]

There were deficiencies in key areas that needed to be rectified quickly during work ups. Canada now needed specialized tank transporters to move the Leopard tanks in a hostile environment. None existed in the system. LGen Leslie was able to convince the Dutch to lease Canada a number of Heavy Equipment Truck Transport vehicles so 13 drivers were sent to the Netherlands for training at the last minute.[174]

The NSE structure under LCol Mathé changed from three platoons and a combat service support company to three full companies that were roughly in line with traditional Canadian doctrine: a supply and transport company; a maintenance company; and a force protection company. The NSE also became responsible for 200 contractors and 60 personnel support agency people stationed at KAF.[175]

How the NSE supported the battle group also changed. Under John Conrad and Dan Labrie, the NSE had a cluster of platoons formed into a combat service support company that was essentially cut to the battle group and led by an infantry major. Under Mathé, the system was different. The nature of LCol Rob Walker's operations suggested that pushing supplies from the airfield to his four bases (Patrol Base Wilson, FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar and Spin Boldak) and then distributing from there was the best means. LCol Mathé and his staff determined that Patrol Base Wilson was geographically

central to the ongoing and projected operations, so a robust combat service support detachment was stationed there. This detachment retained heavy equipment truck transport, wreckers, and Bison recovery vehicles, plus their protection, refueling trucks and a command post. This was prudent given the increased number of attacks on Highway 1 and later on Route Summit. It also permitted recovery teams to deploy to Maywand, Ghorak, Khakrez and points north as required.[176] The PRT at Camp Nathan Smith was another node. This meant mounting combat logistics patrols from KAF to those four points and having a small detachment at each point to handle storage and distribution. At any one time, the NSE had 140 of its personnel either on combat logistics patrols or in the forward operating bases. These personnel were rotated to get everybody "outside the wire." The Force Protection Company had the added responsibility of handling one of the KAF gates, so they were rotated from gate duty to a combat logistics patrol and so on.[177] When D Battery deployed its guns to Helmand, multinational combat logistics patrols were formed to supply the Operation ACHILLES forces, to which the NSE contributed.[178]

Overall, however,

> Dedicated air assets would have allowed us to easily sustain this operation via rotary wing.... The lack of dedicated rotary wing assets made conducting resupply operations in remote locations extremely difficult... rotary wing became increasingly difficult to secure throughout the tour for sustainment operations due to other priorities and consequently were only made available for the purposes of emergency resupply.[179]

Mathé's NSE led the way in procuring local Afghan transport for non-vital supplies and equipment. The owners of the garish "jingle trucks," for a fee, helped the NSE maximize its delivery capability. LCol Mathé and his staff saw this as one means of empowering the local economy and increasing the Afghans' contracting capacity. The fact that the likelihood of a civilian jingle truck being targeted by an IED was much lower than a Canadian combat logistics patrol was not discussed openly. Various measures were put into place to ensure that fuel was not siphoned off before it arrived at the forward operating bases. Over time, the NSE developed relationships with the drivers and they became a source of "atmospheric" information. This was fed into the ASIC.[180]

The combat logistics patrols remained at high risk in the IED environment. Canada still operated the unarmoured Heavy Logistics Vehicle-Wheeled truck, though the Force Protection Company had RG-31 and Bison armoured personnel carriers. Every combat logistics patrol was confronted with the life and death issue of rules of engagement in a crowded city like Kandahar. After some analysis, tactics changed one

month into operations. NSE and battle group patrols were initially dominating the roads and forcing local vehicles out of their way, which led to all sorts of havoc and complaints. BGen Grant ordered the practice to stop. Was there another way of handling the problem? Was there any way of not attracting attention? Naturally this was difficult with armoured vehicles, but when aggressive driving was reduced the number of incidents dropped off completely in the city. There were no IED or suicide vehicle-borne IED attacks against combat logistics patrols in the city when the tactics changed, but these events could not be completely correlated.[181]

The situation on Highway 4 improved throughout 2007 but then the Kandahar City–Ma'Sum Ghar run down Route Fosters became a shooting gallery. The Force Protection Company soldiers were all young reservists, 18 to19 years old. LCol Mathé was impressed with their maturity: "Asking kids to process and assess and use escalation of force legalities in this environment was not easy."[182] The combat logistics patrols were hit regularly. One vehicle technician was even IED'd on three successive combat logistics patrols. Notably, the first Canadian soldier killed in 2007 came from the NSE. Cpl Kevin Megeney died of a negligent discharge from another soldier's weapon on 6 March 2007.

On the Signals front, the shift from a coalition headquarters (CTF Aegis) and National Command Element drove changes to TF Kandahar. For the most part, tactical communications remained in a steady state but it was in the realm of information systems that significant changes were in the offing throughout 2007. For example, in 2006, there were several systems in play: SPARTAN (Canadian); TITAN (Canadian/U.S.); COINS (a NATO intelligence system); SIPR (a U.S. system); and NATO SECRET (a connection between the Canadian brigade headquarters and ISAF HQ). CENTRIX was the primary means of command and control at the brigade level. Once a new national layer was added to the chain of command, however, this network of networks was incapable of meeting TF Kandahar's needs. Better information flow was required at the PRT and the battle group, so the TACNET system was added in 2007, followed by ISAF SECRET, which replaced CENTRIX. These changes meant beefing up the J6 section of TF Kandahar and essentially rewiring Canadian infrastructure in-theatre. Later TF Kandahar rotations benefited from the web of communication established in 2007.[183]

Mention must also be made of the health services support system. The Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit (MMU) remained under Canadian command: LCol M.D Deilgat until February 2007 and then LCol M.C MacKay after that. Its multinational staff continued to work out of a mixed plywood and Weatherhaven facility next to the runway at KAF. As before, the Role 3 MMU played a key role in emergency care for coalition forces as well as for Afghan police and army wounded. As the number of casualties increased, the work done by Role 3 MMU became, unfortunately, all too routine. That said, if the

American medical evacuation helicopters could get the wounded to the Role 3 MMU within an hour, the chances of survival increased exponentially. Canada had a national Role 2 unit as well, which had a variety of resources, including the Evacuation Platoon with its Bison ambulances. A typical daily deployment for Evacuation Platoon had an ambulance detachment with each of the infantry companies, the tank squadron and the recce squadron, and medical technicians in each infantry platoon. Each forward operating base had a physician's assistant located there, while convoys rolled with medical technicians. Camp Nathan Smith had nine medical technicians stationed there: the PRT was essentially a mini-outstation of the Role 2 unit.

The electrical and mechanical engineers from the NSE continued to maintain the upgraded Leopard C-2 tanks and their aging associates, the Badger AEVs and Taurus armoured recovery vehicles. This included repairing the Leopard's implements, the rollers and ploughs, when they took hits from mines and IEDs. The Badgers and Taurus also got armour upgrades during this time to improve their survivability. The main issue with the use of the older Leopard vehicles was the heat in the summer. These vehicles were not equipped to operate in these conditions. The best local modification that could be made was to braise or weld a loop to the inside roof of the turret so that crews could hook up their own intravenous drip when they got heat exhaustion. The tank squadron personnel agreed that they needed a tracked ambulance in order to extract casualties from vehicles as the existing wheeled Bison ambulances could not always get into the same areas that the tanks could, especially in Zharey District.

Two issues drove the deployment of a new vehicle to Afghanistan. The first was that there were not enough LAV III chassis converted into specialist vehicles before the war. The second was the number of LAV III's taken out by IEDs and the time necessary to rebuild them. Back in the 1990s, the Army could not decide on a single fleet of infantry fighting vehicles and, as a result, maintained an upgraded 1960s-era tracked M-113 fleet as well as the incoming wheeled LAV series. Consequently, the decision was made to rebuild the upgraded M-113s into specialist vehicles for Afghanistan. With a new track system, new engine and additional protection, the M-113s came back into service as the Tracked Light Armoured Vehicle (TLAV). In 2007, the NSE handled the deployment of TLAV fitter vehicles (dubbed the "El Camino") and TLAVs equipped with the 1-metre turret taken off of the now-defunct Grizzly AVGP fleet. These vehicles mounted .50 caliber and a 7.62mm machine guns in the turret. The importance of having the TLAVs lay in the fact that the Electrical and Mechanical Engineers' technicians could deploy under armour and conduct repairs to the tanks and LAVs on site in the field instead of dragging them back to Ma'Sum Ghar or KAF and thus reduce exposure of those convoys to IEDs and ambushes.

Photo Credit: Author

The National Support Element technicians worked to equip Canadian vehicles with slat armour in order to counter enemy high-explosive anti-tank rounds. This tracked light armoured vehicle, deployed with the artillery battery, is so equipped.

For the electrical and mechanical engineers in the NSE, this meant that they were now responsible for a third armoured fighting vehicle type. The older NCOs had experience with the M-113 series in their career and taught younger mechanics the ins and outs, but the NSE supply system also had to expand to accommodate spare parts for this new fleet.

Finally, there were new arrangements relating to detainee handling. A new agreement between the Canadian ambassador and Afghan Minister of Defence signed in May 2007 led to an expanded role for the Military Police Company. The existing detainee handling facility was significantly improved and permanent structures erected. Improved procedures relating to detainee monitoring and transfer to the Afghan National Directorate of Security were also put in place.[184]

Operations in Zharey District, May–June 2007

The situation in Zharey District deteriorated as summer approached. Afghan intelligence passed to I Company suggested that the Taliban campaign would continue to employ "heavy mining and IED emplacement along routes to inhibit ISAF influence in the region." Of note, Maj Quick passed on that "They are using this to gain time for preaching jihad to the local nationals in the region in order to convert them and employ them as tier 2 fighters against ISAF/ANSF forces." Led by Mullah Manan, the Taliban in the area were augmented with fighters from Uzbekistan, Pakistan and possibly Chechnya, which displeased many local people, including "all of the children we encountered [who] were indicating a Taliban presence and urg[ed] us to action."[185]

The anticipated Afghan Special Police, who 2 RCR Battle Group thought might be allocated to Zharey, did not arrive. The police in Zharey continued to have split loyalties. When Col. Akka was away, district leader Khairuddin absconded with some of Akka's officers and conducted his own "operations." The Canadians concluded that "it is clear there is Taliban within the ANP as well as the district shura."[186]

Early on in the tour, nobody in 2 RCR Battle Group knew what the District Development Assembly, the Community Development Councils, or the National Solidarity Programme were. Now, CIMIC was better integrated into operations, even though the development programmes themselves were moribund because of district tribalism. By May–June, no operation was conducted without tribal mapping and relationship analysis prior to its commencement—and no operation went without key leader engagements when it was in progress. The company commanders operating in the district, for example, believed that 90% of their information came from foot patrols, shuras, Afghan National Army, Afghan police and the PRT—and that project follow-up by CIMIC was integral to credibility with the population and connected to the quality of the information. Many viewed the ASIC and its comparatively limited knowledge base as "useless." The maps were also considered to be next to useless and the company commanders relied more and more on imagery of the dense, tight terrain for planning. There were also constant problems with overclassification of information.[187]

Over time, CIMIC teams lead by WO Jim Hunter fleshed out some of the underlying problems in Zharey District. Zharey was artificially carved out of Panjwayi, Maywand and Khakrez Districts in 2003. It had an identity crisis aggravated by the population's dispersal during Operation MEDUSA—and not all of its occupants had returned. This generated land disputes between squatters, tenant farmers, and the fact that some landowners lived not just in Kandahar and Kabul, but as far away as Germany. Then there were the water rights issues with Route Summit. There were community representatives —but whom did they really represent? There was no legal system in the district: that void encouraged the Taliban

to act as the government. The only solution was governance followed by a resolution of grievances, but security was required first, and that was problematic because of the lack of police. Once again, Zharey District was a microcosm of the larger conflict.[188] The fact that Zharey District was a problem area was not new to Canadians: the 2005 iteration of the PRT and TF Orion in 2006 had significant insight into Zharey's problems, but it was as if 2 RCR Battle Group was starting from scratch in 2007.

Photo Credit: Author

Route Summit continued to attract parties interested in blowing up the newly paved road. Not all disruptions were Taliban as there were local feuds over water rights in play. Here a Badger armoured engineer vehicle assists with remediation of the irrigation system after an improvised explosive device strike.

Consequently, the battle group continued with its operations. (See Figure 1-7.) The lack of special police, coupled with other TF Kandahar operations in other districts, produced Canadian pressure for additional ISAF troops. The only European country that stepped up to the plate was Portugal, which had a contingent in Regional Command (West). TF Lisbon, based on a commando company mounted in armoured Hummers, was cut to TF Kandahar in May. As the non-standard logistics arrangements were worked out (TF Lisbon required specialized storage for its Port), H Company and a tank troop mounted

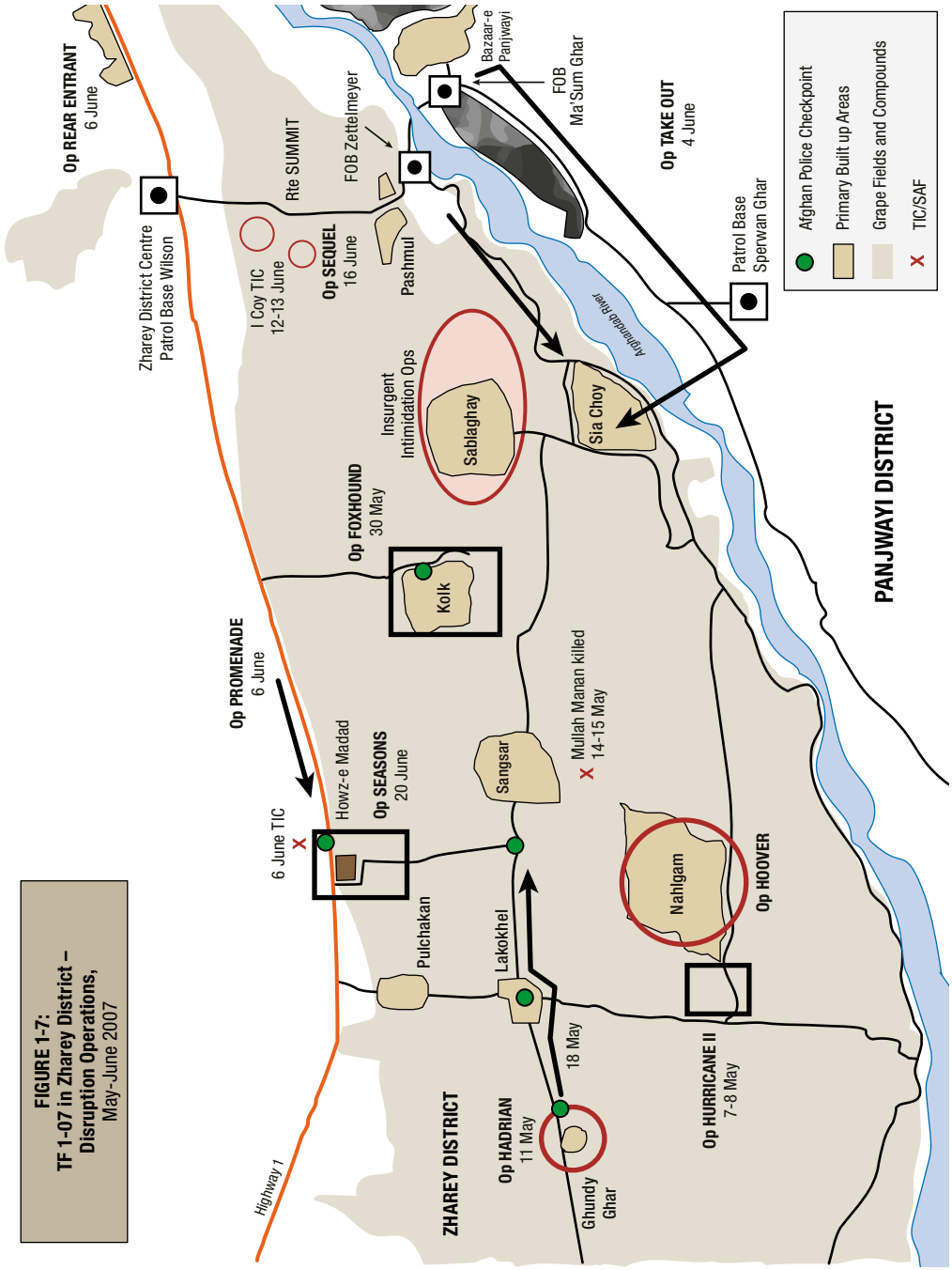


FIGURE 1-7:
TF 1-07 in Zharey District – Disruption Operations,
May-June 2007

Figure 1-7: TF 1-07 in Zharey District – Disruption Operations, May-June 2007

the long-delayed Operation HURRICANE II against Nahlgam on 7 May. By now the Leopard tanks were equipped with mine rollers and specialized plows, not unlike those used during the Second World War. In effect, the tank squadron became, in the words of one officer, "a poor man's route clearance package" that could detonate but not detect mines and IEDs. The idea was to "roll the roads" south from Howz-e Madad to the Diwar crossroads, east to Sangsar, south to Seyaddin and then west into Nahlgam.

The action started when an American jingle truck convoy was shot up with RPGs on Highway 1 near Howz-e Madad as the HURRICANE force deployed. The lead Leopard with the mine rollers then was hit with small-arms fire and multiple RPGs as it led the column south on Route Banff. Between 0611 hours and 1200 hours, the combat team had seven Troops in Contact (TICs) in the space of 1 kilometre, with substantial numbers of RPGs fired at each turn. In each TIC the tanks fired main armament and coaxial machine guns. The combat team killed an estimated 10 insurgents, and captured four, while information was collected identifying three insurgent leaders and their locations. The heat was now getting to the tank crews and, constrained by the terrain, the decision was made to pull back to Patrol Base Wilson and try again the next morning.[189]

On 8 May, the H Company combat team with the Afghan National Army and Canadian OMLT, headed down Route Langley, through Lakokhel, and then turned east to get into Nahlgam. Establishing a leaguer at 0900 at the junction of Routes Montreal and Langley, the combat team was attacked with RPGs. Six enemy were killed by 25mm and 105mm fire. Moving east along Montreal, the Afghan National Army and OMLT dismounted to lead, with tanks following and H Company falling in behind. There were four more engagements with the Taliban (with an estimated 15 killed) before it got too hot again around noon. The Afghans and the OMLT were able to clear some of the compounds, but kept running into civilians. Maj Ruff and his Afghan counterpart decided not to pursue further. The combat team was withdrawn.[190]

Operation HURRICANE's movements and engagements shaped the situation around Nahlgam and Sangsar in such a way that Canadian SOF could track and target enemy leadership that unmasked themselves when they fought back against the tank-led assaults. I Company was then tasked as the QRF if any of the special operations forces operations went wrong. LCol Walker also decided to move back into Gundy Ghar and the planners put together Operation HADRIAN to do that. On 11 May, H Company reoccupied Gundy Ghar without incident.[191]

On the night of 14–15 May, Canadian SOF and the battle group mounted a counterleadership operation. Supported by airstrikes, the Canadian special operators successfully took out Mullah Manan, his second-in-command, and up to 12 of his fighters between Sangsar and Nahlgam.[192] LCol Walker and staff now had an opportunity to exploit

this power vacuum—and wanted to get into and clear Sangsar and Nahlgam if possible. The plan was to have the Portuguese company feint to Howz-e Madad. I Company, which inadvertently got into a contact at Kolk on the afternoon of 16 May, provided additional deception. H Company and the tanks launched from Gundy Ghar at 0330 on 18 May, working two axes east along Route Ottawa. Local people told Maj Ruff exactly where the enemy dispositions and mines were. As the combat team moved along its routes, they had four separate contacts, all similar to those on Operation HURRICANE—small-arms fire, an RPG volley, then retreat or die in place. The combat team obliged the jihadis and engaged at least a section of insurgents. Then one of the Leopards hit a mine with its rollers, followed by a LAV III that struck a mine, with only minor injuries. Once again, constricted terrain and the heat forced an end to the operation and the forces returned to Gundy Ghar.[193]

The Portuguese did not perform as expected. Despite that fact that TF Lisbon was made up of "commandos," they were really light infantry and not special operators. Dismayed Canadians reported that the Portuguese were "very poorly prepared for battle" with no radio batteries, no situational awareness, and a complete inability to provide sitreps to the Canadian battle group. They lacked noise discipline and sang on their non-tactical route march out of the objective area.[194] TF Lisbon was, apparently, the best that NATO ISAF could come up with to backstop the hard-pressed Canadian contingent, but Canadian officers were cautioned not to openly criticize their erstwhile allies' faults because "they at least showed up" to the fight and had been "raked over the coals by their own media about redeploying to Regional Command (South)." Still, it was a universal belief in the battle group that TF Lisbon was a "menace to the battle space" and they tried to find tasks that the Portuguese might be able to handle within their limits. No other European NATO ally deployed forces to assist.[195]

Operation HOOVER Phase 4 continued. The PRT deployed CIMIC teams, one per company, for Phase 4. There was also increased Afghan National Army participation once the kandak commander's polite reticence to provide input was overcome through OMLT battle group discussions.[196] The next iteration was to have I Company, TF Lisbon, the Afghan National Army and OMLT cross the Arghandab River at night and get into Nahlgam, while D Battery fired illumination north of Highway 1 as a deception. Coalition forces from three nations were going to converge on Nahlgam on three axes. To improve mobility through the dense irrigated terrain, engineers from 42 Field Squadron revitalized another Second World War idea: the fascine. In its 21st century iteration, long metal tubes lashed together into bundles were perfect for the task. When dropped into an irrigation ditch, the water continued to flow through the tubes while the armoured vehicles drove over the obstacle. A Badger AEV boom could then pull the fascine out and carry on.

When the operation started early on 25 May, an anti-personnel IED detonated, killing Cpl Matthew McCully, a signaler who was serving with the OMLT. One other Canadian and an interpreter were wounded.[197] A Leopard tank then struck a mine. When Nahlgam was searched, however, insurgents hid their weapons and pretended to be farmers, or else displaced toward Siah Choy. One enemy commander was assisted out of the area by a police sympathizer.[198]

2 RCR Battle Group moved once again on Kolk. Operation FOXHOUND had larger ramifications and Operation ADALAT was gobbling up more and more Canadian troops; the push was on to get the semblance of security in Zharey to free them up. Re-establishing police control of Kolk was considered a crucial aspect. I Company and the tanks, Afghans and the OMLT went in on 30 May and ran into the usual mix of small-arms and RPG fire with the enemy "shooting and scooting" away from the force to buy time. This time, there was more air support. One Leopard fired a 105mm smoke round so that U.S. Air Force A-10s could do gun runs on the enemy as they withdrew away from the advancing force At least 30 enemy were engaged and the Afghans took six prisoners.[199]

By this point, A Squadron's refurbished but aging Leopards were beat to hell. Almost all required extensive maintenance to keep even a troop going, with Tango Maintenance pulling out all of the stops every hour of the day. They discovered that the hulls of the Leopards were cracking from the usage and, in turn, each tank had to be rotated to NSE facilities at KAF to have its hull welded.[200]

I Company kept the pressure up with Operation TAKE OUT on 4 June. This time, it was Siah Choy's turn. I Company moved in at night and debussed from its LAV IIIs east of Siah Choy. Then A Squadron and an Afghan company cleared Route Fosters West, crossed the Arghandab River from the south and seized Objective CHICKEN BALL, with the Afghan National Army clearing. Instead of moving on Objective EGG ROLL, the whole force bypassed and moved to Objective SUSHI, again with the Afghans clearing and the Canadians securing the area around the target community. When the Afghans and OMLT were preparing to extricate through the tank positions and I Company was preparing to pull out, a team of nine insurgents ambushed them, using a classic L-shaped ambush. RAF Harrier fighter-bombers were called in, and they used rockets, danger close, to help I Company's platoons break contact. The enemy fled north and east in small groups, but one I Company platoon, 7 Platoon, pursued them until they reached their limit of exploitation. The whole force pulled back to CHICKEN BALL and then extracted to Ma'Sum Ghar.[201]

Once again, IED use in and around Howz-e Madad caused problems on the vital Highway 1 route. At the same time, there were insurgent stirrings in the Asheque area to the east. Habibullah Jan, the primary power broker in that area, was losing his grip in the aftershocks of the Naqib assassination attempt. 2 RCR Battle Group mounted

Operation PROMENADE in the Howz-e Madad area with the tanks moving about covered by a Sperwer TUAV with artillery on call. When PROMENADE had the insurgents distracted, I Company launched Operation REAR ENTRANT into the Asheque area east of Patrol Base Wilson. The minute the tanks left headed west on the highway on 6 June, the Sperwer TUAV picked up a large Taliban group moving to ambush sites on Route Ottawa and establishing IEDs at choke points. I Company leaguered their LAV IIIs and conducted a dismounted night operation into Asheque. Nothing was discovered and any enemy who were there went to ground. The Portuguese, however, were lit up with small-arms and RPG fire, which forced the tanks to turn around and bail them out.[202] When PROMENADE and REAR ENTRANT were in progress, insurgents surged into the Kolk area again, isolated the police checkpoint, and cut the throats of pro-government people in the community. The police checkpoint at Howz-e Madad was subsequently attacked, twice in 72 hours, by 30 insurgents. REAR ENTRANT was based on police intelligence. After all was said and done, the assessment was that "the ANP are working with the Taliban… in order to observe our TTPs and how we set our outer and inner cordons. It is my assessment that if we continue to deploy with limited information provided by the ANP I believe we may be putting battle group soldiers unnecessarily at risk."[203] Intelligence analysis concluded that Manan's death forced the Taliban to bring in new commanders from Helmand to prop up the fight in Zharey.

Up to now, there had been little activity on Route Summit. I Company with attached recce elements conducted a series of patrols west of the road and became embroiled in a TIC on 12–13 June when two Taliban groups in grape huts opened up on 7 Platoon. Too close for artillery or air support, the platoon opened up with M-72 light anti-tank weapons, while the Leopards breached south to support them with 105mm fire. Ten more enemy were spotted in a compound. In a running fight involving two Canadian platoons and a tank troop supported by a Harrier aircraft, the enemy decided to hold their ground, which allowed Maj Quick to resort to a classic firebase with tanks, followed by a right flanking action onto an enemy position. Four RPG teams were taken out with tank and small-arms fire, which drove the enemy survivors west into a wadi. Another contact, this time an RPG and a PKM machine gun, pinned down a Canadian section. Close air support was sent in, while more tanks deployed from Ma'Sum Ghar. Snipers started to pick off enemy RPG teams as they emerged, while a Harrier took out a section of enemy who fled into a grape hut. Eventually, most of the enemy were pinned into a wadi system, but the tanks then bogged down. As the Taliban struggled to escape, they were dispatched with M-777 artillery and a 1000-pound bomb from a Harrier. I Company estimated, when it was all over, that there were 18 enemy dead and as many wounded.[204]

Photo Credit: Author

Operation SEASONS was one of several disruptive incursions into Zharey District undertaken by I Company, the tank squadron, the Afghan National Army and their Canadian mentors in June 2007. After an artillery strike against insurgent positions, a UH-60 medical evacuation helicopter stands off to evacuate Afghan National Army wounded.

The closer proximity of the insurgents forces to Route Summit resulted in Operation SEQUEL on 16 June. Once again, I Company conducted a dismounted insertion at night into the target area, Burmohammad, followed by a mounted assault led by a Badger AEV down Route St. John's. This, it was hoped, would accomplish two things: it would get the enemy away from both Highway 1 and away from Route Summit in that area. I Company again found itself in a series of contacts, which included the destruction of an 82mm recoilless rifle team and ten heavily armed insurgents. One platoon stumbled across another enemy 82mm team and became embroiled in a separate engagement. There was an estimated eight enemy killed: one of these was a mid-level Taliban commander.[205]

To keep the enemy off balance along Highway 1, LCol Walker sent I Company, Leopard tanks from A Squadron, an Afghan National Army company and the OMLT back into Howz-e Madad. Operation SEASONS, mounted on 20 June, was almost standard operating procedure by now with dismounted infiltration, tank–Afghan army assault,

and close air support to kill any enemy that were reinforcing the fight. As the SEASONS force drove its way south of Howz-e Madad, they encountered stiff resistance—and even an enemy sniper. One Leopard tank took an 82mm recoilless rifle hit on its glacis plate. The jet penetrated the hull and came close to the ammo storage, which would have had obvious catastrophic effects for the crew. Once again, the enemy threw personnel and resources at the SEASONS operation and they were quickly mown down with artillery, close air, small-arms and tank fire.[206]

Across the river in Panjwayi, when Operation SEASONS was in progress, a Gator vehicle used to resupply Canadian-manned checkpoints on Routes Brown and Fosters, struck a massive IED, killing Sgt Christos Karigiannis, Cpl Stephen Bouzane and Pte Joel Wiebe from C Company. With the slacking off of enemy activity in Panjwayi and with the constant pressure exerted over in Zharey, it is likely that this attack was conducted to distract ISAF away from Zharey for a limited period so Zharey's Taliban could recover. Indeed, three rockets were fired at Ma'Sum Ghar that night, possibly for the same reasons.

Photo Credit: DND IS2007-7265

I Company 2 RCR clears a compound complex during Operation SEASONS. These incursion operations kept pressure on the insurgents in Zharey, who took significant losses during this time and were unable to gain the momentum they enjoyed in 2006.

On 24 June, LCol Walker reported to TF Kandahar that "we are spread too thin and cannot respond to incidents effectively in Zharey and Panjwayi due to numerous commitments and the disposition of our forces. Massing the appropriate combat power is extremely difficult." From 42 Field Squadron: "I believe this is a bridge too far but as always we are supporting the battle group with gun tape and bubble gum… the men are tired and continuing an extended tempo of operations like this will incapacitate the squadron…."[207] 2 RCR Battle Group could not keep up the disruption operations in Zharey District indefinitely. Something had to give. Where? Zharey or Panjwayi?

Panjwayi District Operations, May–June 2007

Maj Henderson's C Company and LCol Eyre's OMLT mentors working with the Afghan kandaks were confronted with a radically different set of problems in Panjwayi District. First, there was a mobility crisis which in turn was connected to the size of the district relative to Zharey. Second, Panjwayi was not adjacent to Highway 1, which meant that higher formation headquarters did not see it as a priority. Third, there was a substantial Afghan security forces laydown in the district but appearances were deceiving as there were deep rifts between the Afghan security entities that militated against effective operations. Arguably, C Company did not have the same depth of comprehension of the inner workings of Panjwayi District compared to its counterparts in Zharey, which made it difficult to discern what the problems actually were.

In early May, the community of Mushan came under C Company's scrutiny. Located at the western end of the Horn of Panjwayi and accessing western Zharey, the Reg Desert and Band-e Timor in Maywand, Mushan was geographically important to whoever hoped to exert influence in the area. Indeed, it had a reputation as a smuggler's haven as it served as a perfect waypoint after coming out of the desert on a Helmand or Pakistan run, or if one wished to avoid the "police" and their "tolls" on Highway 1. Route Fosters, a dirt road and sometimes merely a black track, went east from Mushan paralleling the Arghandab River, to Bazaar-e Panjwayi and then hit the paved road all the way to the outskirts of Kandahar City and Highway 1. An alternate route, Lake Effect, paralleled Fosters to the south and accessed the southern suburbs of Kandahar City through Dand District. The dominant community in this area was Nakhonay. (See Figure 1-8.)

For the most part, nobody really understood what was going on in Mushan, so C Company mounted a patrol to gain situational awareness. It was uneventful. There were "police" of some variety in the community and contact was easily made with the local population, who were openly friendly. A source passed on to the patrol that the insurgents had weapons caches in the Mushan area. After the Canadian patrols left, a policeman was subsequently beheaded. All was not what it appeared to be in Mushan.[208]

Figure 1-8: Panjwayi District Municipalities and Route Overview, 2007

Afghan army intelligence learned that the Taliban were moving more forces into and through Nakhonay. A 40-man indigenous Taliban group hosted part of what was reported to be a 350-man Pakistani and Baluchi contingent that was filtering through the area. The Afghan army also had reports that the Taliban were recruiting vigorously in Nakhonay and Salavat. The Afghan police discussed establishing a checkpoint in Nakhonay and asked C Company if they would expand their patrols to Route Lake Effect.[209]

The new developments led to a reorganization of the security forces in the district. This had long-term implications, so the commanders of the battle group, OMLT, and 2nd Kandak, met to sort this all out. The agenda was to get the police to handle all of the checkpoints on Route Fosters, which would free up troops for other tasks, and Lt.-Col. Sherin Shah agreed to pressure his police counterparts. Of concern was the growing Nakhonay problem. Afghan army intelligence was slowly making connections between the attacks north on Highway 1 near Senjaray and the "hedgehog" that was developing in Panjwayi East. With their forces pinned down doing checkpoint tasks in Panjwayi West, it was difficult to shift forces to confront both problems. The commanders agreed to mount an operation into Nakhonay as soon as it was feasible.[210] (See Figure 1-9.)

Operation MIDAS was designed as a large presence patrol through Nakhonay and Salavat. Lt.-Col. Shah allocated his 3rd Company. A Canadian platoon from C Company was made available. While MIDAS was in the planning stages, however, a threat warning came in that the Taliban were preparing to kill Lt.-Col. Shah with a suicide bomber. At the same time, 60 families fled Mushan in response to Taliban warnings that there was going to be fighting. Clearly, Nakhonay was important, so the insurgency was sensitized to any operation near Nakhonay and sought to draw the coalition forces away from the village and its environs.[211]

Lt.-Col. Shah persuaded local leader Haji Fazil Mohammad and the police commanders to agree to police occupation of all of the Route Fosters' checkpoints by the end of May. In return, the battle group and the PRT would assist with the construction of more and better checkpoint facilities not only on Fosters but wherever they were needed in Panjwayi District.[212]

Operation MIDAS swept through Nakhonay and Salavat on 19 May. Operation MIDAS did strengthen linkages between 2 RCR battle group and 2nd Kandak and it was a good workout for procedures, but there was no contact with the enemy at all. The limited intelligence that did come in confirmed that Nakhonay was essentially an insurgent "G4 node," that is, a supply and transfer area.[213]

The enemy then ramped up activity on Route Fosters West. Police checkpoints were attacked on 21 and 22 May and, this was new, the Taliban established a roadblock on Fosters, north of Talukan. The police approached Lt.-Col. Shah for assistance and then approached the OMLT as well as the battle group. A platoon from C Company, an Afghan National

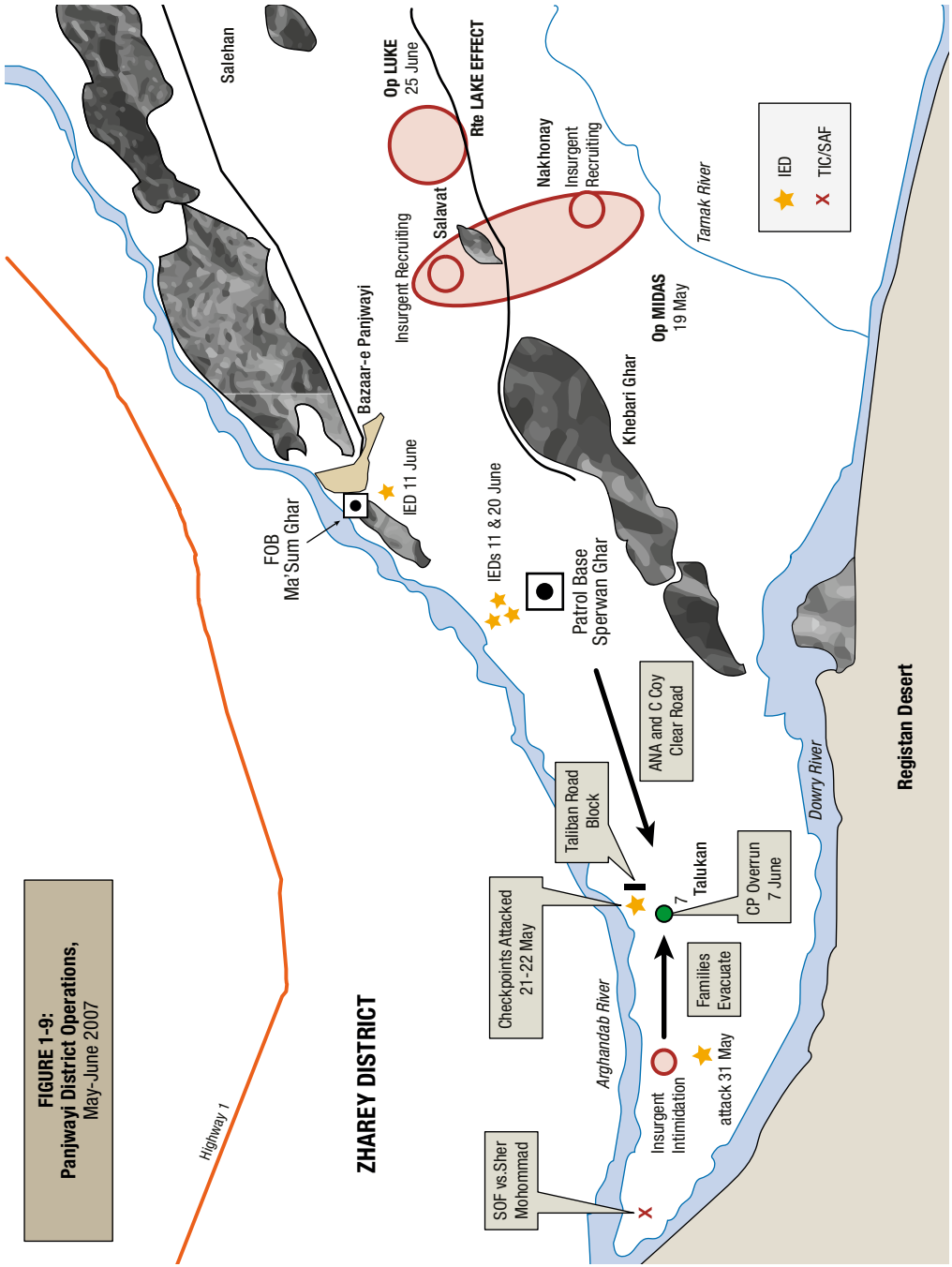


Figure 1-9: Panjwayi District Operations, May-June 2007

Army platoon from 1st Company, 2nd Kandak, and engineers from 42 Field Squadron moved out to clear Route Fosters. There was no contact. The promised Taliban attack on Mushan occurred on 31 May but there were no reports of what was happening or who was in control of the area.[214]

The mini-crisis over Mushan led to several simultaneous but semi-coordinated actions. The Governor, Asadullah Khalid, decided that Standby Police Unit 005 would reinforce and then occupy Mushan. C Company spun up a contingency operation, OMERTA, to deal with IED placement on Route Fosters north of Talukan, and to patrol into Mushan. To make matters even more interesting, Canadian SOF launched an operation against a leadership target near Mushan on 1 June, bagging the notorious Sher Mohammad near Doab.[215] When C Company got into the community, they found only a handful of the 30 police left and the commander was dead. At night, the Taliban mounted a PSYOPS campaign, leaving night letters on all key residents' compounds.[216] The Afghan police flowed back into the Fosters' checkpoints and D Battery initiated an illumination schedule along the route at night to disrupt enemy movement.[217]

Enemy activity only increased. Mines were placed near Talukan on Route Fosters West and one of these wounded six Afghan police. The population gave C Company and Afghan army patrols in Talukan the cold shoulder, which merely confirmed that Talukan was a hot spot.[218] But there was more. On 11 June there were three IED strikes against Canadian vehicles in Panjwayi District. One of these detonated under an armoured recovery vehicle, which burned and then cooked off in a spectacular fashion less than 100 metres from FOB Ma'Sum Ghar (there were no casualties). The following day, a C Company convoy took an IED hit at the intersection of Routes Fosters and Brown. When the tanks and recovery team arrived, they hit another IED, destroying a HLVW wrecker. Twenty-four hours later, C Company surged into the area between Talukan and the Arghandab River, while TUAV flights were redirected over Fosters. The TUAV operators were able to detect what they thought were two IED emplacement sites, which were then exploited and dismantled.[219]

The battle group headquarters detected what they thought was a relationship between enemy operations in Zharey and in Panjwayi. This spate of IED activity coincided with the insurgents' eastward movement toward Route Summit and the subsequent contact that I Company was embroiled in on 12–13 June.[220] Indeed, the killing of three Canadians with an IED on Route Brown on 20 June appeared to be an attempt to draw resources away during the height of Operation SEASONS.

The IEDs did not stop: the Afghan police were hit again and again. On 14 June the Taliban overran Checkpoint 7 and ambushed the Afghan police as they brought in reinforcements. Maj Henderson held shuras to determine what was driving this new campaign. The district shura kept telling him that this was all tribal violence, an argument

that Maj Henderson did not buy into, given the increased IED use. The ever helpful Haji Baran opined that he was having "a hard time recently convincing locals not to allow Taliban to destroy the new road [Route Fosters and Brown]… Since they blame the government for destroying their crops through this lack of water they see no reason to resist the Taliban."[221] Maj Henderson and his men also discovered from local sources that the insurgents were using the mosques, knowing full well that coalition forces were sensitized when it came to searching them. C Company wanted to use mosque rehabilitation to relationship-build with the mullahs, but there was no clear means to get development resources for that purpose.[222]

A large shura with district leader Haji Fazil Mohammad, Haji Baran, Mohammad Sarwar from Talukan and the security force commanders produced the consensus that "security was stable in western Panjwayi until approximately two weeks ago when [Standby Police Unit 005] moved into Mushan." The Afghan district leaders pressed the idea that the police from this unit were "mostly Noorzai and the population of Mushan is mainly Ishaqzai" and that tribal rivalries were in play. Maj Henderson confirmed this when he met with local leaders from Talukan, Zangabad and Sperwan.[223]

Photo Credit: Author

Route Brown, seen here in 2011 facing Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar, connected the base with the main east-west service route in Panjwayi District. Initially a dirt track, Brown was expanded and paved to deter improvised explosive device attack after several Canadians were killed in 2007. The enemy attempted to ambush vehicles on numerous occasions along this corridor, usually moving in from the west (right).

That view did not completely coincide with reality, however, since violence in Mushan started before Standby Police Unit 005 arrived. IED use against Canadians operating further east, who were not seen to openly associate with Standby Police Unit 005's activities, did not fit either. Standby Police Unit 005 was known to be a virtually private militia belonging to the Governor and had a reputation for corruption. Elements in the Kandahar power structure likely wanted control of Mushan, a vital transshipment node, and saw an opportunity to compete with or bypass Highway 1 "tolls" by using an alternate route from poppy-bearing areas to Kandahar City. The extant tribalism appears to have been superimposed retroactively to disguise the commercial and turf aspects of the dispute. Indeed, the Taliban were clearly exploiting these fractures for their own purposes on several fronts.

But then, the plot thickened. Reports came in that there was "Al Qaeda" in Mushan.[224] To make matters even worse, the Standby Police Unit 005 officers garrisoning Mushan got into a gunfight with National Directorate of Security agents in Mushan Bazaar: four agents were killed and three seriously wounded. The JPCC looked into events, as did the OMLT, and were both assured by their counterparts that this was a tribal issue.[225] It now looked like Mushan was embroiled in a *Badal* blood feud.[226]

The IED situation had detrimental effects on the NSE's ability to resupply the forces in Sperwan Ghar. Civilian water resupply, for example, dropped off, forcing the NSE to use its resources and increase the size or number of combat logistics patrols.[227] As Maj Henderson and his men got out into the communities, they learned that the "Pakistani Taliban" were paying locals in Zangabad and Sperwan Ghar to lay mines and IEDs. What was going on in those areas and what was going on in Mushan appeared to be separate things.[228]

What really interested C Company, however, was the apparent Taliban sensitivity whenever any coalition forces or ANSF went anywhere near Nakhonay. Situated south of Route Lake Effect, this community was a cluster of compound complexes with one road in and out. It was completely surrounded, 360 degrees, with grape fields, drying huts and complex terrain: from the air, Nakhonay looked like a fortress.

Operation LUKE was designed to assert coalition presence in Zalakhan and Salavat, two pro-government communities north of Nakhonay, and then screen Nakhonay. Taliban from Nakhonay had infiltrated this area and murdered an elder who told them to leave. LUKE was essentially a manoeuvre to collect information and included Afghan police, part of 2nd Kandak and a platoon from C Company, led by Capt Matt Dawe. The results were interesting: the amount of chatter coming out of Nakhonay was as voluminous as it was varied: English, Persian, Tajik and even Chechen were identified.[229]

Repeated attempts to ascertain the best way forward in Panjwayi District produced a shura facilitated by the PRT CIMIC teams so that local leaders could air their grievances. This provided additional insight into district dynamics. In essence, communities did not

think that Canadians knew what was going on when they detained people and wanted a say in explaining who was guilty and who was not—at the community level. They did not trust the police, in any of its forms, because of tribal rivalries. Many believed that "reformed" Taliban who were processed through the Kandahar provincial PTS amnesty programme were annoyed that they had not received what they had been promised by the Karzai government: land and a government job. One leader went so far as to suggest that "the power of the government be shared amongst the Taliban and other parties" so security can be attained.[230] Clearly, there was something wrong in western Panjwayi District. Unfortunately, Panjwayi was not a priority. The provincial government was increasingly fixated on the northern districts.

Operations in Northern Kandahar Province, June–July 2007

Regional Command (South) and TF Kandahar worked on Operation ADALAT in March in order to address the possibility that the enemy would move on Arghandab District in the wake of the Naqib assassination attempt. The plan involved security and development in Shah Wali Kot and Arghandab Districts, with a disruption operation in Khakrez and northern Shah Wali Kot. The public announcement by the Government of Afghanistan and the provincial government that Dahla Dam would be a central development feature was folded into the plan, as were the district and community mechanisms for the National Solidarity Programme.[231]

In early April, the chiefs of police for Khakrez and Shah Wali Kot Districts complained to the JPCC that the enemy were building up in both of their districts. These concerns predated the Dahla Dam announcement by nearly two weeks. By the end of April, both police leaders were joined by their colleague in Neish District and were asking for an operation to clear the Taliban out of these areas before they could be established.[232] (See Figure 1-10.) On 27 May, Afghan police in Shah Wali Kot were ambushed while protecting a road repair crew near the dam. With two dead and three wounded, the Afghan police beat back the attack. Canadian Sperwer TUAVs tracked two separate enemy groups as they withdrew.[233] The decision was made by TF Kandahar to launch Operation ADALAT. It took some time to sort out the command relationships because TF 71 was a U.S. Special Operations Task Force that was part of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, not NATO ISAF. The Americans agreed to redeploy part of TF 71 from Spin Boldak, muster their Afghan allies, while Canada agreed to deploy two M-777 guns from D Battery, and tanks from A Squadron, plus an infantry platoon from H Company. TF 71 established a forward operating base in Khakrez, and U.S. Army CH-47s Chinooks flew the Canadian guns into positions there on 29 May.[234]

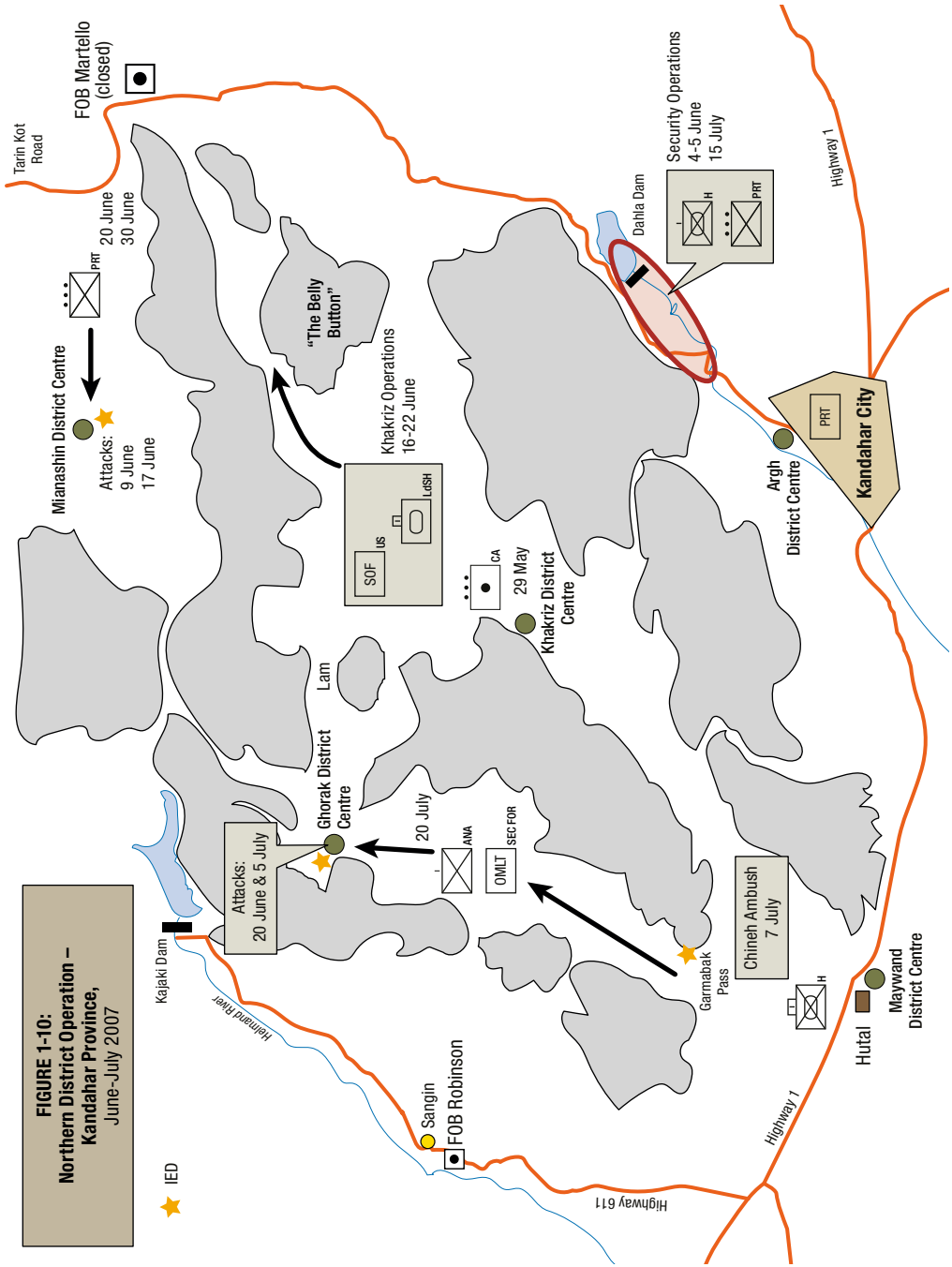


Figure 1-10: Northern District Operations – Kandahar Province, June-July 2007

On 30 May, LCol Chamberlain coordinated a security meeting between Canadian and Afghan commanders and the district leaders, from which several important items came to the fore. The Afghans viewed the developing problem in terms of a traditional insurgent transit route stretching from northern Helmand to Zabul via Khakrez and upper Shah Wali Kot: "these districts are used as temporary staging areas to launch small-scale operations into Arghandab as well as suicide attacks into Kandahar City. Residents were notably frustrated by the lack of [coalition forces] rapid response…. Overall the mood was one that recalls the similar situation of Taliban build up in Panjwayi–Zharey with pressures in Khakrez likely to lead to trouble in Shah Wali Kot and then threats into Arghandab and Kandahar City."[235]

LCol Chamberlain noted that "All Afghan representatives clearly do not favour an Operation MEDUSA-style approach and were supportive of the nuanced delivery of the Operation ADALAT approach." The inclination was to have the Afghan police forces take the lead and handle the Arghandab and lower Shah Wali Kot security tasks while the PRT worked the development piece. A coalition force would handle disruption operations in Khakrez and upper Shah Wali Kot.[236]

By 4 June, A Squadron combat team clanked its way up Route Oregon in Arghandab District, headed for Shah Wali Kot. Constant reports flowed into the JPCC that the enemy were going to make a play for Dahla Dam.[237] On arrival, they encountered no enemy—to no great surprise, though the district leader believed there were hundreds in the hills. After a series of key leader engagements, the Canadians were told that the population wanted an ISAF presence in lower Shah Wali Kot and that the enemy would not attack if that presence was enduring. Promises had been made by "ISAF" in the past and they had been broken, so the population needed reassurances.[238]

While Operation ADALAT continued to unfold, insurgents attacked the district centre over in Ghorak. The Ghorak police chief contacted the chief of police of Kandahar Province, Brig.-Gen. Esmatullah Alizai, for assistance, who in turn contacted the JPCC for Canadian help. When none was forthcoming, he sent 15 officers, apparently on foot from Maywand, to the centre. With seven wounded and the enemy preparing to attack again, heated words were exchanged between the provincial chief of police and TF Kandahar. Twenty-four hours later, the insurgents attacked a police patrol in Mianishin District, killing five and wounding three. Esmatullah demanded Canadian assistance to extract the dead officers' remains, but was turned down by TF Kandahar. The pressure on the police leadership, already heavy, got worse on the night of 9 June when motorcycle-borne assailants assassinated Afghan Police General Dawood. It looked as if the police system, such as it was in Kandahar, was about to collapse at the top end.[239]

Shah Wali Kot reported multiple TICs on 9 and 10 June. Coincident to these incidents, a Canadian patrol, possibly from the PRT, arrived at Shah Wali Kot District centre on a reconstruction-related task. The district leader thought they were reinforcements and was disgusted to learn they were there on what he called "a social call… They refused to help and just left!" The JPCC was able to get TF Kandahar to ask the Americans for attack helicopter cover for the police.[240]

When the Afghan police made their way south with the dead and wounded from the ambushes, A Squadron and part of H Company made their way into Khakrez District to link up with TF 71 for operations. D Battery continued to provide fire support from FOB Khakrez and plans were made with TF 71 for future operations in upper Shah Wali Kot to relieve pressure on the police in the south. The force grew to three Special Forces Operational Detachment Alphas with associated Afghans amounting to a small company for each Operational Detachment Alpha, plus a U.S. ETT and part of 2nd Kandak from 209 Corps, in addition to the Canadian mechanized forces and artillery. A special forces Operational Detachment Alpha was brought in to mentor a 100-man private militia that styled itself as the Oruzgan highway patrol.[241] In a general sense, the Canadians and U.S. Special Forces would operate in and around the "Belly Button" feature and Gumbad, while the "police" and their mentors would secure the Tarinkot Road and open it up for business. There were no illusions at TF Kandahar. This was an economy of effort mission, as there was no provision for development or reconstruction support.

The Taliban upped the ante on 16–17 June: three American embedded trainers were killed in a massive IED attack in Khakrez. On the same day, the insurgents put in an assault against the Mianishin district centre. With the casualties mounting and ammunition running out, the Mianishin chief of police pleaded for assistance. A pair of F-18s were dispatched as a show-of-force mission over the area but as there was no certified coalition joint terminal air controller available on the ground, they would not drop bombs. The Deputy Governor (Asadullah Khalid was on "medical leave" after the Mullah Dadullah Lang affair) and Chief of Police Esmatullah were "quite belligerent" about their demands for Canadian assistance.

TF Kandahar was able, once again, to acquire American attack helicopter support to over-watch an Afghan relief convoy if they could put one together, but Esmatullah demanded immediate support. Cooler heads, like Col Mohammad Abdul Hakim, the provincial Chief of Security, put a plan together with Afghan police, army and Canadian Army. The JPCC got the Afghan National Army on the line and was able to get troops as part of the package.[242] The Governor, now back from medical leave, plunged into the deepening morass. After a discrete late-night Afghan meeting, Brig.-Gen. Alizai was relieved from his position.

The Governor made it clear to LCol Chamberlain that he thought that the Mianishin district leader "had a tendency to cry wolf" and that the threat was not as "significant as originally described." He then moved on to his primary interest: improvements to the road from Mushan to Bazaar-e Panjwayi.[243]

When Khalid saw that Mianishin could become a public relations liability, however, he decided to conduct a media event at the district centre. TF Kandahar then instructed LCol Chamberlain to mount up his Force Protection Company and deploy it in support of the Mianishin operation, now called Operation COLLABORATION. Police morale was at such a low point that Khalid determined that the event would publicly laud the "heroes of the Afghan National Police." The PRT commander was not happy: "[such a deployment] sets a precedence which could restrict other PRT operational outputs at the governance and reconstruction and development lines of operations."[244] Once again, the PRT was in danger of losing its ability to independently deploy its other government department and CIMIC personnel, just as TF Orion's PRT was crippled by the removal of B Company back in 2006.

As if to spite the Governor, the Taliban moved to attack the Ghorak district centre yet again on the night of 19 June. Reports flowed in that the local population warned the already depleted police garrison that the Taliban were about to attack so they moved south but maintained observation. The Ghorak chief of police even requested that ISAF drop a bomb on the centre now that the insurgents occupied it.[245] TF Kandahar then instructed LCol Eyre over at the OMLT to deploy his SECFOR platoon to link up with a gaggle of American embedded trainers to retake the Ghorak district centre. Removal of the OMLT's SECFOR had approximately the same effect on the OMLT that the removal of the Force Protection Company had on the PRT.[246]

OMLT SECFOR and the American embedded trainers linked up with the Maywand police (of dubious reliability at the best of times because they worked for the unreliable Haji Saifullah) and prepared to head north through the Garmabak Pass. An Afghan vehicle struck an IED, which aborted the mission temporarily. A troop of tanks from A Squadron joined the force, along with an Afghan National Army company from 2nd Kandak. On relaunch, the composite force reached the Ghorak district centre on 25 June with no opposition. The Governor decided to mount a media relations operation and flew into the Ghorak District centre with PRT representatives, where a large shura was held with locals. Always the brilliant opportunist, Khalid promised that Standby Police Unit 005 would redeploy from Mushan to Ghorak to handle security. The composite force left Ghorak on 27 June, followed by most of the Ghorak police force who did not want to wait for Standby Police Unit 005 to arrive.[247]

Meanwhile, over in Khakrez District, H Company combat team and TF 71 stepped off for operations around the rugged "Belly Button" feature. On arrival in Leaguer CANNISTER to the north, however, several breakdowns on the worn Leopards reduced the serviceable number of vehicles to two. An armoured recovery vehicle also blew its power pack. The combat team now had no means to recover their vehicles if they broke down or bogged. The NSE had a difficult time resupplying the Ghorak forces by ground with their resources stretched thin, thus delaying Canadian operations. D Battery continued to support TF 71 operations, killing several enemy personnel with 155mm and 81mm fire.[248]

The intent was to sweep through the villages of Padah and Mian with a view to setting TF 71 up to infiltrate the Gumbad area. Once A Squadron and H Company got into Padah, a violent and chaotic two-hour clearance operation erupted: the enemy were using the deserted village as a bed-down location. As the Leopards and LAV IIIs entered the area, two-man RPG teams and clusters of surprised insurgents moving among the irregular compound complexes attacked them. Moving steadily through the area, Leopards picked off RPG teams with 105mm fire, while M-777 artillery called in by the forward observers took out every identifiable insurgent observation post on the high ground. The infantry's LAV IIIs with their 25mm cannon even sniped at individual insurgents as they tried to mount a defence. Some 18 insurgents were killed in the fighting with no coalition casualties. Major caches of ammunition and weapons were uncovered and an enemy communications facility was destroyed with tank fire.[249] Seizure of Padah and Mian set TF 71 up for their assault on Gumbad, which proceeded the next day.

Though the Padah engagement was a success, and TF 71 disrupted the insurgents in the upper Shah Wali Kot area, these operations were of great concern to the Canadian sub-unit commanders. Some planner in a higher headquarters wanted A Squadron to cut away two tanks, an infantry platoon, an engineer section and an armoured recovery vehicle for a wholly separate operation in Shah Wali Kot. This could "become very problematic should problems arise…. deployment of tanks in this manner could have grave results." Similarly, 42 Field Squadron bluntly pointed out that "Operations in the Ghorak District are over-extending our forces."[250] It was time for the battle group's part in Operation ADALAT to cease. The D Battery M-777 troop was flown back to KAF by Chinook helicopter, and A Squadron combat team moved back to Ma'Sum Ghar.

And it was back to Mianishin, once again. The insurgents returned and used harassing fire against the police. When the police called for help and did not get it in a timely fashion, the bulk of them quit their posts and went home on 30 June. Operation COLLABORATION II, yet another ad hoc grouping of Afghan police, Afghan army and Canadians, prepared to go in, yet again. The Governor had enough and ranted to his police leadership about the "lack of police resolve." The new provincial police chief, General Sayed Agha Saqib, Khalid assured everyone, would sort things out.[251]

Unfortunately, the drama did not end. A sophisticated two-pronged insurgent attack against Standby Police Unit 005, ensconced in the district centre and an observation post, generated seven wounded and, as before, the defenders ran low on ammo. TF Kandahar initially denied police requests to deploy an infantry company, but were able to get several show-of-force air support sorties by allied aircraft over the district centre. Once again, the concept of the joint terminal air controller was explained to the police leadership. A police resupply column headed north to Ghorak District centre in response to the Taliban attack but it was ambushed near Chineh on 7 July. Six police vehicles and 60 policemen were hit and twelve were killed.[252] Subsequent to the ambush, Maywand District centre was shot up by local insurgents.

H Company and A Squadron deployed in their LAVs and tanks down Highway 1 to Maywand, linked up with OMLT and an Afghan army weapons company, and rushed to the ambush site before moving on to Ghorak District centre. The decision was made to leave an Afghan National Army company and OMLT mentors at Ghorak this time for the rest of the tour.[253] A Leopard from A Squadron hit a mine in the Garmabak Pass. Notably, these operations, including the Leopard recovery, delayed a Canadian operation in Zharey District.

These district centre attacks were reminiscent of the Garmsir and Nawa attacks in July 2006. Judging from the pattern of enemy activity in northern Kandahar Province, it is likely that their leadership learned an important lesson from coalition operations in Helmand. The insurgents knew full well that the district centres were symbols of governance and that the government would react to re-take them. In this case, the near-simultaneous attacks against Ghorak, Mianishin, plus threats to Shah Wali Kot, drew out Afghan police at a time when the police were institutionally in serious trouble. TF Kandahar kept getting drawn in, partly to demonstrate solidarity, but also because there was the possibility that an enemy build up would be directed against Arghandab, which itself was in the throes of a leadership vacuum.

This must all be placed against the context of what was happening in Zharey and Panjwayi. Clearly, the coalition was making headway in those districts. By applying pressure to weaker districts further north next to their resupply routes, the insurgent leadership knew that the coalition would have to release their hold in Zharey and Panjwayi to deal with these new threats, and all of this activity was conducted in the heat of the summer as well as on the verge of another rotation of Canadian troops.

In mid-July, the Taliban moved back into Shah Wali Kot, using loudspeakers to order the population out of the area. It looked again like the enemy were making a play for the Dahla Dam area; on 14 July, I Company and Kandahar City police deployed in a show of force. There was no contact.[254]

TF Kandahar was, throughout this period, at odds with Regional Command (South) over what the regional centre of gravity should be: Helmand Province or Kandahar Province. The British leadership, naturally, gravitated to Helmand and its insatiable need for ground forces to fight the strengthening coalition between the clans and the insurgents, produced to a great extent by flawed counternarcotics policies. The Canadian view was that police credibility and capacity building in Kandahar Province was at risk at this crucial time and should have been a priority to improve the overall security situation. The Americans had their own priorities in Regional Command (East) and were not interested. There was, however, not enough coordinated Canadian influence in Kabul to "sell" the Canadian position in higher circles and force a re-allocation of resources.[255]

Mullah Naqib returned to Arghandab on 23 July and met with Maj Chip Madic, the PRT deputy commander. As they discussed the recent developments in and around Arghandab, Naqib asserted that "if ISAF did not react to the massing of insurgents immediately, there would be the necessity to conduct a large-scale operation in the future, which would cost the lives of Canadian soldiers." Naqib informed Maj Madic that "the threat to Kandahar lies in Pakistan, that the Pakistani government is aiding the Taliban with their insurgency in all manner of ways, and that the ISI would be able to wipe out the entire cadre of Taliban leadership if they so desired because they know where all the leaders live… were one to wipe out Pakistan, one could focus on development in Kandahar Province unhindered, and he prayed for Allah to do so."[256] In Naqib's view, "the ANP required more support from ISAF at a faster rate of speed than they currently have… they are the first line of defence in the fight against the insurgents."[257]

Policing Problems Continue

The complexities of the judiciary-police-incarceration "triangle" or lack thereof in the case of Kandahar, fueled the insurgency in certain localities and was the reason why local people tolerated foreign jihadist assistance from Pakistan. Unjust structures produce unjust decisions. Unjust decisions generate grievances. Unaddressed grievances reduce the legitimacy of the government. Grievances, when not addressed, produce opposition, and over time, recalcitrant opposition shifts to extremist violence. The Canadian Army's involvement with the Afghan police in 2007 provided a window into the key limitation the coalition forces faced in countering the insurgency.

In retrospect, there were far too many organizations involved and they were uncoordinated. The failure of the Germans to manage the police "pillar" produced much "ad hocery". As a result, there were multiple and sometimes conflicting views on what should be done on the police front, with little or no Afghan input. The broadest expression of this problem was dubbed the "blue versus green" problem. Were the police supposed to be

police, were they a gendarmerie, or were they a militia? That question was never answered definitively to the satisfaction of any of the police assistance entities in Kandahar, let alone in Kabul. Without an answer, short-term tactical solutions designed to put a man in uniform with an assault rifle at a checkpoint with minimal training became the default position. To go beyond that, there needed to be answers to several unanswerable questions: what law was that nearly illiterate individual supposed to enforce? The Constitution? Sharia Law? Pashtunwali? And if that policeman arrested a suspect, what court was supposed to try him? All of the Italian-trained judges slated for Kandahar claimed refugee status in Italy and did not return to Afghanistan. Assuming the suspect was guilty, what facility should he be incarcerated in—and for how long?[258]

There was substantial and unrelenting pressure, after the detainee situation became a political issue in Canada, to somehow fix the three legs of the system and align them to Canadian values and standards. The critics in Canada refused to accept the fact that a Western legal system simply did not exist in Afghanistan in 2007, nor would it in the near future. These demands collided head on with the reality of the situation in Kandahar. TF Kandahar and its units were forced to adapt to the circumstances, no matter how distorted the outcome became.

The Canadian organizations included the MP Company, the CIVPOL team at the PRT, and DFAIT. The Military Police were themselves split culturally. During the peacekeeping years of the 1990s, a culture that leaned toward civilian policing dominated: Military Police stopped wearing the same uniforms soldiers did, for example, and adopted a black uniform. There was a belief that many people joined so they could set themselves up for civilian police employment, as opposed to career military policing. Many Cold War-era Military Police skills were lost: among them mass prisoner of war handling and rear area combat operations. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) CIVPOL, on the other hand, were gendarmerie-like in their outlook. DFAIT was not split: its representatives had funding for all manner of programmes related to improving policing and legal systems capacity-building.

Maj Bernard Hudson at TF Kandahar and Superintendent Dave Fudge at the PRT slowly delineated policing responsibilities, while Gavin Buchan and Jon Davison provided whatever DFAIT funding they could muster. Similar to the OMLT-Afghan National Army issues, CIVPOL was concerned that the police lacked a logistics system and planning processes at the higher levels. This was aggravated by poor communications systems, and, when pay was not forthcoming, local corruption was used to make up the pay differential. Indeed, many police took time off to assist with the poppy harvest to make ends meet. Professionalizing the police was the CIVPOL approach. The Military Police were initially interested in contributing to Operation PORTCULLIS but that became a CIVPOL responsibility.

As a result, the Military Police contributed to the military training component at the regional training center in addition to their other duties. The idea of a "policing OMLT" was raised in many Canadian quarters where the Military Police could contribute to field mentoring, but it took some time to develop the concept.[259]

The pressure to pump out partially-trained warm bodies from the DynCorp-run regional training center was substantial, but the Canadian players all understood that they had a moral responsibility to at least provide Afghan policemen with basic military survival skills and more than a veneer of police training. For the most part, that was what occurred throughout early 2007. The districts needed police to man checkpoints and conduct searches in the "blue box" while surrounded by the "green box"—the battle group and the Afghan National Army. The fine details of the law were not as relevant in those situations. Kandahar City, however, needed police to patrol as "beat cops" would back in Canada, that is, mediate local grievances and keep the peace on the streets. Law became more important in this environment.

All of these aspects were works in progress and never seemed to move quickly enough for the critics. The Afghan police themselves were internally divided, sometimes deliberately so. The DIAG programme (see Volume I) converted some tribal militias into "police" but even though they were vetted through the regional training center, all Afghans knew their loyalties. The growing number of non-militia professional police was at odds with those groups, even though they wore the same blue-gray serge uniform and carried the same identification card and weapons. Each district chief of police was hostage to the tribal, not to mention commercial, dynamics of their district. Some were appointed via a patronage process, so the provincial chief of police did not control all of his personnel. Here there was another dynamic: Kandahar versus Kabul. The provincial power brokers, public and non-public, did not want Kabul meddling in their commercial activities, which were, in turn, facilitated by "their" police who "understood" how business was done. This was how General Esmatullah Alizai ran afoul of the informal Kandahar power structure and was replaced with General Saqib. By July, it was evident that there was an assassination campaign against the police in Kandahar City. But by whom? The constant turbulence meant that the police system in Kandahar could not stabilize in 2007. Some people did not want it to do so, and not exclusively the Taliban.

On the positive side, Operation PORTCULLIS had a significant effect on security in the city. The checkpoints, about to become police sub-stations, did not provide 100% security, but the semblance of perimeter control was a start. This was a major PRT success. It must also be said that the TF Kandahar-hosted security coordination meetings between the police forces, TF Kandahar and the Afghan National Army were another crucial success, as were the operations of the JPCC, rocky though that relationship was at times.

The mechanisms were in place, and were used by all players, even if they were imperfect. Though they built on foundations established in 2005–2006, TF Kandahar was able to take them to the next level.

It was difficult, however, to avoid the feeling that by mid-2007 there were deep systemic problems with the police. Maj Craig Gardner, running the JPCC, put it best:

> There is not a day that goes by when I am not disappointed in the [Afghan police]. They are well behind the eight-ball, are suffering horrendous losses, and are poorly paid. They are however trying, but lack the mentorship and in my opinion a trusting relationship from district to HQ and back down again.[260]

Despite all of the Canadian efforts, some things would not change. A JPCC report noted that:

> The J5 staff asked me to query the ANP regarding an Afghan Radio Broadcast that discussed a toll being levied on Taxi and Bus drivers traveling on HWY 1 WEST of KC. Apparently it was reported that the toll was 500 Afghanis, and drivers threatened with being shot if they did not pay. All personnel in attendance stated that of course this is what happens, it was business as usual and would never stop. All police throughout all districts do this, and are typically linked to power brokers such as Ahmed Wali Karzai and Mullah Naqib. It is considered to be all about filling pockets with cash, and a destabilized security situation only makes it easier for this to happen… thus many of these individuals will never want the security situation to improve. *I was quite shocked at the candor of the comments by the personnel around the table.*[261]

There was a fleeting ray of hope, however. In late 2006, the Germans finally admitted failure at the Afghan International Police Coordination Meeting, held in Dubai. The European Union agreed to bail out the Germans and establish a European Union police training mission. The Americans, not wishing to be bamboozled with a name change and a bunch of talk, instructed Combined Security Assistance Team-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) to augment its police training structure and get Police Reform going in the Ministry of the Interior. Powerful forces from Kandahar tried to interfere with Police Reform at every turn, but the Americans came up with the idea of deploying Police Mentoring Teams run by a Regional Police Advisory Command (South). The American Police Mentoring Teams, thrown together hastily in summer 2007, were National Guardsmen mixed with Military Police. The first Police Mentoring Teams, three 11-man teams, arrived at the PRT in late July 2007. Regional Policing Assistance Command (South), however, was not an

ISAF organization (it belonged to Operation ENDURING FREEDOM) and did not fall under any command structure that remotely connected it to TF Kandahar. They also had little or no experience in the complexities of Afghanistan.[262]

Into the Relief in Place: Operations, July–August 2007

LCol Walker was increasingly concerned about the state of affairs west of the city. 2 RCR Battle Group warned TF Kandahar that if more police were not made available and soon, control over Zharey District would be lost. The insurgents were ramping up their information operations against the population throughout the district and if there was no government presence, there was no competing message.[263] All the battle group could do was continue with its disruption programme. (See Figure 1-11.)

Operation DRAGON took I Company into Tajmohammad, situated between Howz-e Madad and Lakokhel. Using their, by now, characteristic night infiltration techniques, Maj Quick took three dismounted platoons through extremely dense terrain into designated defensive locations that were located on anticipated Taliban withdrawal routes. His "Zulu'd" LAV IIIs and 1st Company, 2nd Kandak and their Canadian mentors from the OMLT established a firing line along a wadi line to the north. From their positions, I Company observed insurgents preparing weapons and readied to move north when contact was initiated and the fight was on. "It was clear the Taliban had no idea how the company was oriented on the ground," according to the post-op report. The Taliban then withdrew east and was pursued by I Company, joined by 1st Company. This resulted in multiple contacts and multiple enemy killed. A joint terminal air controller was able to direct an A-10 to take out more of the fleeing enemy, and D Battery's guns were also brought to bear. A Squadron moved to Howz-e Madad in case I Company and 1st Company needed extraction, but the only need for armour on this occasion was the use of a Badger to bury all of the enemy bodies.[264] H Company then loaded up for Operation MARS, while I Company recocked for Operation PLUTO to keep the pressure up on the Howz-e Madad–Sangsar area.

Over in Panjwayi, Maj Henderson and C Company struggled to maintain the balancing act between the Horn of Panjwayi in the west and the developing problem in the eastern part of the district around Nakhonay. The enemy expressed their annoyance with continued Canadian interest in Nakhonay on 4 July. A Canadian convoy from C Company, led by a Leopard tank equipped with a roller, moved slowly east down Route Lake Effect. An Icom chattered, "They're coming." At a dip in the road adjacent to the tip of the Salvat Ghar feature, the IED triggerman located 120mm to the north detonated a TM mine lashed to a 152mm shell. The blast struck an RG-31, killing six Canadians and an Afghan interpreter.[265]

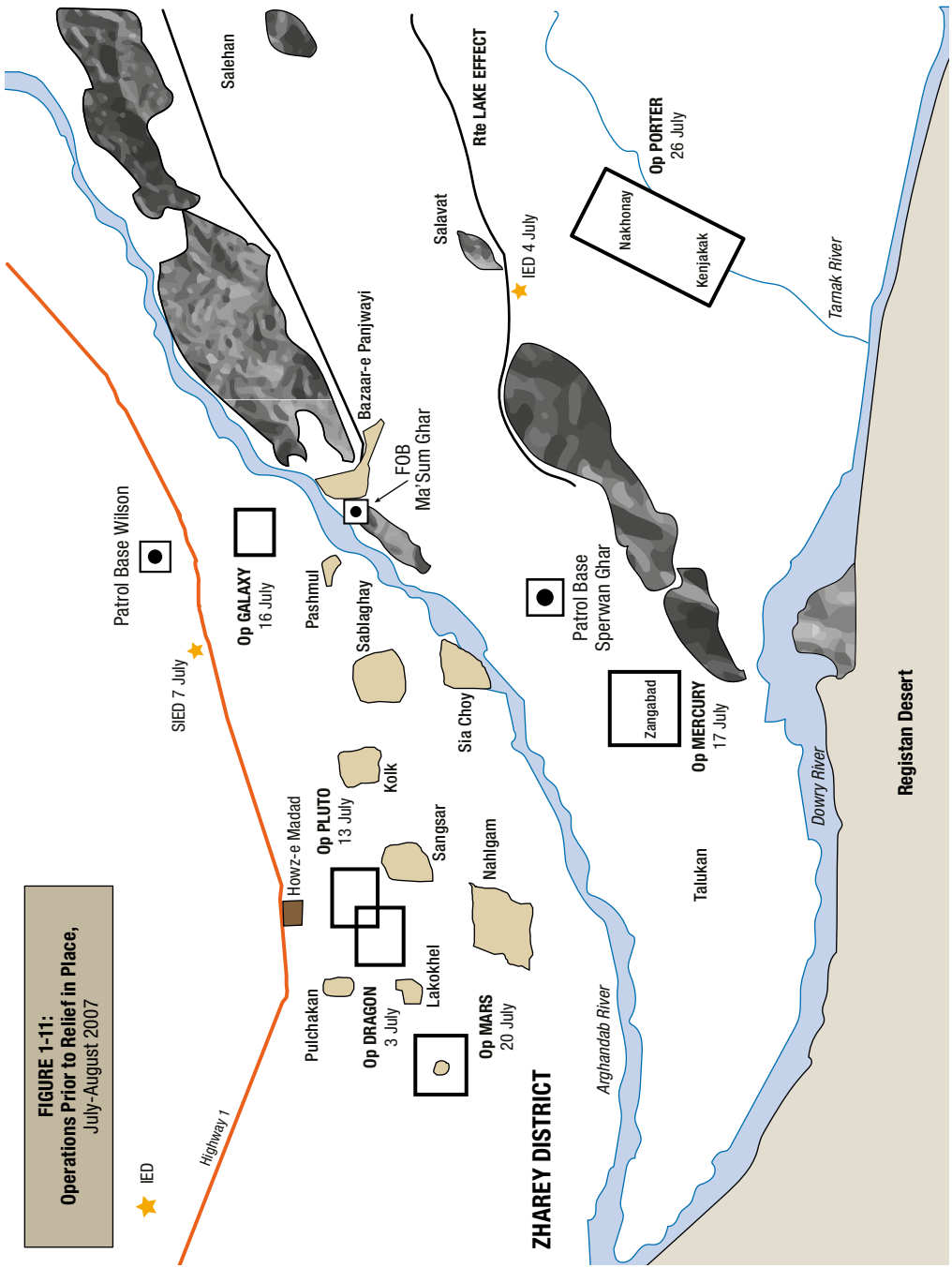


Figure 1-11: Operations Prior to Relief in Place, July-August 2007

The dead included Capt Matt Dawe; Cpl Jordan Anderson; Cpl Cole Bartsch; and Pte Lane Watkins, from 3 PPLCI; Capt Jeff Francis from 1 RCHA; and MCpl Colin Bason from The Royal Westminster Regiment. The blast was so uncharacteristically large that a Badger had to be brought in to right the shattered hull so the crew could be recovered. Counter-IED and Canadian Forces National Investigative Service investigators swarmed all over the site before everything was removed.[266]

Three days later, a suicide vehicle attacked an H Company LAV III that was deploying on Highway 1 for Operation MARS. This attack wounded four Canadians and took place in the same area as numerous other suicide IED attacks that summer. A number of IEDs were also reported on Route Fosters West at the same time, which resulted in the full closure of the route. LCol Walker reported that: "The IEDs that are attacking us are large enough to cause significant damage to armoured vehicles. There is a high rate of non-serviceable electronic countermeasure (ECM) on the vehicles." There were more rockets directed against Ma'Sum Ghar. The assessment was that the indirect fire was intended "to tie down forces in Ma'Sum Ghar in order to facilitate an IED strike against a battle group convoy on [Highway 1]." Operations MARS and PLUTO were delayed a week.[267]

Operation PLUTO's objective was to disrupt enemy activity, and in particular, an enemy command and control node between Howz-e Madad and Sangsar. ISTAR resources indicated that there were two 30-man groups operating in this area, some of whom had been pushed out by Operation DRAGON. A night infiltration by I Company, along with Recce Platoon and snipers, was completely successful, while the LAV IIIs and 1st Company and OMLT again from 2nd Kandak formed an interdiction line along the first wadi line south of Highway 1. The night infiltration was completely undetected, and the Canadians could see the Taliban praying and conducting morning ablutions 200 m away. There were no civilians present, the fields were not tended and the place looked neglected. The snipers gained "eyes on" a pair of insurgents, one of whom was identified as a known Taliban commander. Permission was given to engage, and Abdul Baqi and his partner were taken out. The fight was on and two insurgent groups engaged the Canadian positions from two directions. Artillery and close air support were called in: one bomb missed its target but inadvertently took out the other.[268]

Maj Quick prepared to move his force south to Objective BUGS, where the Taliban commander met his end. A Sperwer TUAV then spotted an 82mm recoilless rifle team and a 12-man group armed with RPGs: bomb runs eliminated these. When the force did advance, it was engaged by another section-sized element fighting from a grape drying hut. They were also hit with close air support. BUGS, it turned out, was a fully prepared fighting position with personal equipment, weapons, ammo, stores and cell phones.

Some body parts were found. During the exploitation phase, once the Afghan National Army and OMLT linked up, the force came under mortar fire from the north. D Battery laid a smoke screen to interfere with any observers. Three rounds out of 20 fired at the Canadian-Afghan force detonated but there was no damage.[269]

PLUTO's delay had follow-on effects. A significant volume of ISTAR reportage was coming out of Asheque along Highway 1, so a plan called GALAXY was formulated to go into the community of Makuan after the estimated 70 insurgents that had taken up residence there to interdict the highway. However, when the threat to the Dahla Dam emerged on 14–15 July, H Company was cut away to head up to Shah Wali Kot instead.[270]

When they returned, H Company mounted a deception operation with its vehicles to draw the attention of the enemy early warning net. Unlike previous operations, the accompanying Afghan National Army company conducted a night insertion as well. There was no contact. Snipers spotted an insurgent O Group who were preparing to respond to the Canadian and Afghan movements. The snipers took out all six leaders. A firefight erupted but when artillery was called in, it landed on the friendly positions 700 metres off the targets and "effectively suppressed India Company resulting in a delay in the advance." As before, Sperwer TUAV coverage facilitated close air support on several groups of reinforcing insurgent groups, with a pair of 500-pound bombs killing ten enemy personnel. Six more enemy personnel were captured. Afghan police were then brought in to assist with detainees and searches, which freed up the troops to fight. The Afghans found a cell phone on a detainee: his commander was calling him for situation reports. This led to the clearance of that location, but by then the enemy departed.[271] One of the enemy prisoners was a medium-value leadership target. Operation GALAXY was determined to have decisively disrupted the enemy in the vicinity of Asheque.[272]

I and H Companies then moved on to a series of layback patrols around Route Summit, which was getting cratered by locals who were annoyed over the irrigation and water rights issues. The long-delayed Operation MARS was executed on 20 July and H Company re-established Canadian positions at Gundy Ghar. Subsequently, they were mortared the next night. The Afghan police were not "impressed by ISAF unwillingness to fire indiscriminately into possible Taliban locations without positive identification. The lack of serviceable heavy support weapons at the ANP checkpoints severely limits ANP force protection."[273] Was the Afghan police a militia or a police force?

The situation in Zharey remained critical, however. Col. Akka announced suddenly that his officers at Gundy Ghar, Lakokhel and the Langley checkpoint would be removed because they lacked weapons and ammunition. To the battle group, it looked like blackmail directed at ISAF and the Governor to get more weapons.[274] Four days later, the Taliban overran Afghan police checkpoints at Sablaghay and Kolk. The Canadian assessment follows:

> There is a relatively good chance the ANP will lose additional checkpoints in the Zharey District in the next few weeks, which will represent a significant blow to Operation BAAZ TSUKA Phase 3C. Some of the important factors that exacerbate the situation include the fact that there is very little interaction between the civilian population and the ANP, the checkpoints are difficult to sustain, and the ANP have suffered significant loses recently.[275]

Maj Henderson and C Company were at this time working up two operations in Panjwayi: VENUS and MERCURY. 2nd Company from 2nd Kandak plus OMLT mentors were allocated for the disruption of enemy forces that were increasingly present in the Zangabad and Talukan communities. Timed to coincide with Operation GALAXY, the upcoming relief in place of 2nd Kandak limited its employment to one operation. VENUS was cancelled and Operation MERCURY focused on Zangabad. C Company swept into the community and had two short, sharp encounters with the insurgents, killing two, wounding four. Among the detainees was an IED facilitator involved in the Route Fosters attacks.[276]

The security forces did not completely neglect eastern Panjwayi District. The new Kandahar Province chief of police, General Saqib, wanted to demonstrate the Afghan police's capability to both the enemy and to ISAF after what proved to be a very bloody summer for his forces. An ambitious plan to cordon and search Nakhonay and an adjacent community, Khenjakak, was raised with TF Kandahar. After some negotiation and fine-tuning, Operation PORTER emerged from the process and wound up involving practically the whole battle group.

General Saqib put together the Afghan police portion of PORTER with vague intelligence. The overall idea was to have police blocks on major routes in Dand and south of Khenjakak, and a thorough search of the compounds in the target areas, with the military forces handling a cordon. Saqib pulled out all the stops but was only able to muster 85 police on short notice, including prosecutors and National Directorate of Security from the city, as well as police from neighbouring Dand District. Initially, Saqib wanted to search Salavat, Nakhonay and Khenjakak in one day but he was persuaded by TF Kandahar that this was too ambitious. Khenjakak became the primary target area.[277]

C and I Companies plus A Squadron moved to Route Lake Effect on the night of 25 July and established leaguers. The Leopards and Badgers created a breach to an area northwest of Khenjakak and awaited the Afghan police, who arrived around 0500 the next morning. The tanks led the police to an assembly area. I Company, C Company and A Squadron essentially formed a ring of steel around Khenjakak, while Saqib's police conducted searches. Of the seven detainees taken, two were Taliban leaders. The police uncovered ten RPGs, bounding anti-personnel mines, mortar fuses, "spider" devices (used to detonate IEDs

outside of the protective ECM bubble), plastic explosives, and ammunition of all types. The combined Canadian–Afghan force withdrew but took ineffective mortar fire on the way out.[278]

What Operation PORTER missed, however, is significant. Information that flowed in the next day asserted that the Taliban had a court in Nakhonay and had also made a deal with the populations of Nakhonay and Khenjakak. The insurgents would not lay IEDs in the area, nor would they draw attention to their activities by conducting operations in and around the two communities. Some 200 Taliban apparently moved out of the uncordoned areas to establish ambushes but they were constrained by the local agreement.[279]

The IED problem coupled with maintenance issues finally put the brake on 2 RCR battle group operations: "As we possess no route clearance package capability the ability for us to keep the routes safe has become almost insurmountable." Only two out of three Badgers were operational and the engineers had a significantly high-stress casualty level by this time in the tour.[280]

2 RCR Battle Group sub-units returned to their bases and awaited the relief in place with the incoming battle group. The relief in place itself did not go well. Incoming sub-units did not arrive complete and this made it difficult for the TF 1-07 sub-units to acquaint them with the situation and the terrain. At the same time, much of the battle group's combat power was undergoing heavy maintenance, and, as it was the previous summer, the heat was deadly. There were three planned joint disruption operations: CASTOR, CARNIVAL and BAPTISTE. Two could not be mounted because of the chaotic relief in place. Operation CASTOR was mounted in Shah Wali Kot to familiarize B Company, 3e Bataillon du Royal 22e Régiment (3 R22eR) with the area. There was no time to do a proper work up so the Van Doos deployed without firing in their LAV III weapon. Contact started immediately as the enemy moved on Zangabad and Gundy Ghar with a vengeance.[281]

Conclusions

The nature of Canada's war changed significantly in the first half of 2007 as a comparative steady state emerged in the Canadian Army's deployment in Kandahar Province. The enhancement of TF Kandahar's capabilities commensurate with the capacity-building and development lines of operation set the conditions for Canada to pursue those lines in parallel with the security line. The PRT built solidly on its predecessor's foundations, and mounted numerous and bold initiatives that were finally connected to a national development strategy. The priority this time was to connect all levels of Afghan government to facilitate the delivery of services. Once Canadians moved out and then down into the communities, however, the "simplest things became difficult" as the PRT ran headlong into the realities of local politics, which, in turn, generated enough friction to prevent Afghan projects from meeting Canadian timelines.

The successful disruption operations mounted by 2 RCR Battle Group throughout spring and summer 2007 in Zharey District were, unfortunately, marred by the lack of policing capacity to hold the ground. This was not a new problem, but one where a better solution was sought, toward the end of the tour, at a much higher level. Certainly, the turbulence in NATO ISAF strategy for the country did not help. Without these disruption operations, however, the enemy would have regained the initiative in Zharey and threatened Kandahar City as they had in 2006. 2 RCR Battle Group must be credited for doing "more with less" while higher entities tried to respond to the insurgency *tout azimuths*. The OMLT expansion to the brigade-level and the partnering of two 1-205 Kandak with 2 RCR Battle Group qualifies as a major Canadian success during this time, moving the Afghan National Army toward company and battalion-level operations instead of deploying platoon-sized levies for others. Realizing and accepting that an independent and functional Afghan National Army was part of Canada's exit strategy for Afghanistan finally found firm expression at almost all levels. It also reduced pressure on the single Canadian battle group operating throughout the entire province.

As with many endeavours, unexpected events deflected a hard-fought trajectory. The destabilization of Arghandab District, followed by expanded enemy activities in the northern provinces, coupled in turn with Regional Command (South) priorities in Helmand Province placed substantial strains on the Canadian effort all at once and in opposite geographical directions. The legacy deployment in Panjwayi and Zharey was enough of a stretch for 2 RCR Battle Group: deploying forces to Maywand, Khakrez, Shah Wali Kot and Ghorak, let alone Spin Boldak, taxed the NSE to the limit (not to mention highlighting the folly of the 1990's Canadian Forces aviation policies). TF Kandahar tried to do too much with too little, though BGen Grant and his staff did employ creative measures and leveraged personal connections with allies to the maximum. When the enemy moved into Nakhonay and threatened Dand District, it was almost too much and, with the mass casualty-producing IED attacks employed by the insurgents, the domestic political pressure from Canada for tangible successes and the pressure from the Afghan government to maintain credibility became the definition of the word "intense."

In stark terms, the relief in place did not go well. Once again, it was conducted under extreme environmental conditions in the heat of August. The battle group's equipment was worn out and every move was maintenance-intensive. Increased enemy IED use, the lack of appropriate route clearance capability coupled to the need to travel between the by now static Canadian positions in Zharey and Panjwayi increased the dangers to a significantly higher degree than previous reliefs in place. On the operational level, however, TF Kandahar and its units continued to prevent the enemy leadership in Quetta from realizing their objectives in and around Kandahar City. The disruption operations continued.

ENDNOTES

1. The author was consulted by CEFCOM in the course of these discussions during this period.
2. Interview with BGen Tim Grant (Kandahar, 3 June 2007).
3. Interview with Lt Col Charlie Herbert, UK Army (Kandahar, 5 June 2007).
4. January 2007 "Commander's Direction-Operational Plan for Winter 2007."
5. Ibid.; Annex A, "Campaign Design."
6. Interview with Lt Col Glenn Stockton, Australian Army (Kandahar, 7 June 2007).
7. Ibid.; Interview with Lt Col Charlie Herbert, UK Army (Kandahar, 8 June 2007).
8. "Developing the Afghanistan National Development Strategy: Strategic Workplan Final Draft, January 2007."
9. Ibid.
10. "Commander's Direction and Guidance: Commanding Officer Strategic Advisory Team Afghanistan" (5 March 2007).
11. See Gavin Buchan, "Canada's Whole of Government Approach: Pursuit of Civil-Military Coherence in Afghanistan, 2005–2009," Master's research project, Department of Political Studies (Kingston: Queen's University, 2010).
12. Discussion with SAT-A personnel (Kabul, 23 July 2006).
13. Discussion with SAT-A personnel (Kabul, 26 June 2007). Authors observations, SAT-A (Kabul, June 2007).
14. Telephone interviews with David Mulroney (9 October 2014 and 13 October 2014).
15. Indeed, once Mr. Mulroney was removed from his position and sent to China as ambassador in 2009, BGen Jon Vance noted to the author that the interagency atmosphere was much more collegial.
16. A useful examination of the interdepartmental organizations dealing with Afghanistan can be found in Nicholas Gammer's "The Afghanistan Task Force and Prime Ministerial Leadership" a 2011 paper from the Canadian Political Science Association Annual Conference at www.cpsa-acsp.ca. The paper's limitations include the fact that it is Ottawa-bureaucratic centric and thus divorced from the complex realities of operations in Afghanistan.
17. Ibid.
18. Lalani's past appointments can be found at: DFAIT Biographical Note (27 April 2007); DFAIT Diplomatic Announcement (28 August 2012); "Arif Lalani: A Key Player in Canada's Middle East Police," *Embassy Magazine* (3 July 2013). The author encountered a senior Kandahari power broker during the meeting between Lalani and the power structure in Kandahar City on 10 June 2007.
19. The author repeatedly attempted to contact and interview Ambassador Lalani but there was no response.
20. Interview with Major Bernard Hudson (Kingston, 3 July 2008).
21. Discussions with LCol Tom Bradley (Kandahar, 6 and 7 June 2007).
22. In-theatre discussions with J-5 and PRT staff with the author (June 2007).
23. LCol Bob Chamberlain briefing to the author (10 June 2007).
24. Note that this operation's code word was spelled in three different ways in almost every official document from the time. It was usually spelled "PORTCULUS" or "PORTCULLIS."
25. Chamberlain briefing to the author.

26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. PRT CIMIC Ops Report (8 October 2006).
29. PRT CIMIC Report (28 October 2006).
30. The possible reasons included: decreased interest at the higher levels of government in Canada; DFAIT annoyance at the CDS's attempts at defence diplomacy; shifting UAE policy vis-à-vis Iran; the unwillingness to cut the UAE in on intelligence; problems between the UAE liaison detachment and the harassment of female Canadian soldiers.
31. PRT DSR (26, 27 February 2007).
32. Discussions with the author with JTF-A J-5 personnel (Kandahar, 4 June 2007). See also notes on a nasty encounter with a CF Padre (Kandahar, 4 June 2007).
33. Interviews with Helena Kadi (Camp Nathan Smith, 15 June 2007); interviews with LCol Bob Chamberlain (Camp Nathan Smith, 10 and 15 June 2007); discussions with Maj Chip Madic (Camp Nathan Smith, 15 June 2007); discussions with Andrew Scyner (1 November 2011). The author also observed PRT Targeting Board processes in 2007.
34. Ibid.
35. DCOS R7D Weekly Reports (28 March, 4, 11, 18 April 2007); PRT DSR (4 March 2007).
36. Emails Michael Callan to D.L. (8 February 2007); DCOS R&D Weekly Reports (18 April 2007).
37. Message U.S. Embassy to State, "Kandahar Politics Complicate US Objectives in Afghanistan" (6 December 2010).
38. Briefing to the author, KAF detention facility (May 2011).
39. A formal complex designation system existed: for example, 1/1/205 Brigade was 1st Kandak, 1st Brigade, 205 Corps but for stylistic purposes the brigade will be designated 1-205 Brigade, and the kandaks designated Kandak 1, 2, 3, etc. The author acknowledges that different OMLTs used different terminology over the years to mean the same thing.
40. Telephone interview with LCol Wayne Eyre (11 November 2011); "OMLT End-Tour Briefing" (July 2007).
41. Eyre interview. Bradley interview.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. "JTF-A R3 OMLT Structure" (February 2007).
45. "JTF-A End Tour Report-OMLT: Commanding Officer's Assessment."
46. Ibid.
47. TF 1-07 DSR (4, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 23 February 2007). See also interview with LCol Rob Walker (Ma'Sum Ghar, 16 June 2007).
48. Briefing to the author by TF 1-07 senior staff (Kandahar, 16 June 2007).
49. Telephone interview with LCol Steve Graham (11 March 2013).
50. Eyre interview.
51. TF 1-07 "Op Order 01 Op ATHENA R3" (14 February 2007).

52. Ibid. See also Eyre interview.
53. “Op MINOTAUR POR” (13 February 2007).
54. “H Cbt Tm CONOP: Howz-e Madad Post-Op report-Troops in Contact, 23 February 2007” (25 February 2007).
55. Notes from a Meeting with National Directorate of Security (16 July 2007).
56. USPI analysis passed to the Battle Group.
57. Information Operations brief to the author (KAF, 7 June 2007).
58. JTF-A “R3 End Tour Report.”
59. This material was captured, translated and disseminated in the spring of 2007.
60. JTF-A “R3 End Tour Report.”
61. PRT DSR (26 March 2007).
62. JTF-A Briefing, “Current Threat Picture” (15 July 2007).
63. JTF-A J-2 briefing to the author (6 June 2007).
64. Canadian Press, “Afghan Warlord Urges Youngsters to Lay Down Arms” (24 January 2007).
65. PRT DSR (17 February 2007); JPCC DSR (8 March 2007).
66. JPCC DSR (10 and 11 March 2007).
67. TF 1-07 DSR (12 March 2007). See also undated engineering power point presentation, “Dahla Dam.”
68. JPCC DSR (10 March 2007). Interview with Helene Kadi (Camp Nathan Smith, 15 June 2007).
69. PRT DSR (15 March 2007).
70. JTF-A HQ J-2 summary, “Naqibullah Assassination Attempt” (22 March 2007).
71. JPCC DSR (11, 13, 14, 16, 25 March 2007).
72. TF 1-07 DSR (20 March 2007).
73. RC (South) Operations Order Op ADALAT (25 March 2007).
74. Ibid.
75. JTF-A “Op ADALAT Briefing” (12 July 2007).
76. Eyre interview.
77. Bradley interview.
78. NSE DSR (19 April 2007).
79. NSE DSR (4 May 2007).
80. H Company DSR (20 April 2007).
81. TF 1-07 DSR (9 March 2007).
82. TF 1-07 DSRs (17, 20, 25-26 March 2007).
83. TF 1-07 DSR (5 March 2007).
84. JTF-A “Op ACHILLES Briefing to R3” (13 July 2007).

85. TF 1-07 DSR (30 February 2007; 3, 4 March 2007).
86. TF 1-07 DSR (18 May 2007).
87. TF 1-07 DSR (6 March 2007).
88. Graham interview. Note that the use of Canadian MPs as mentors was formalized in the Police OMLT later in 2007 during the next rotation.
89. TF 1-07 DSR (6-7 March 2007).
90. TF 1-07 DSR (9, 10 and 11 March 2007).
91. "Op ROAD TRIP Post-Op Report" (11 March 2007).
92. TF 1-07 DSR (12 March 2007).
93. TF 1-07 DSR (5 and 6 April 2007).
94. KLE Report-Zharey District Shura Meeting in Pasab (20 March 2007).
95. PRT DSR (15 February 2007).
96. KLE meeting at PRT with district leader and claimants (31 March 2007). PRT DSR (31 March 2007).
97. CIMIC briefing to the author (Camp Nathan Smith, 9 June 2007).
98. TF 1-07 DSR (March 2007).
99. TF 1-07 DSR (16 March 2007).
100. TF 1-07 DSR (20 March 2007).
101. TF 1-07 DSR (22 March 2007).
102. "TF 1-07 B Squadron Royal Canadian Dragoons" report compiled from Recce Squadron DSR by Lt Ben Gould. See also Graham interview.
103. TF 1-07 DSR (25,26 March 2007).
104. Ibid.
105. TF 1-07 DSR (26 March 2007).
106. "TF 1-07 B Squadron Royal Canadian Dragoons" report compiled from Recce Squadron DSR by Lt Ben Gould.
107. Ibid.
108. TF 1-07 DSR (30,31 March 2007).
109. Ibid.; Graham interview.
110. CONOP HELIX (5 March 2007); TF 1-07 DSR (29-30 March 2007).
111. TF 1-07 DSR (3-4 April 2007).
112. "Post Operations Report Op NEPTUNE" (12 April 2007).
113. "TF 1-07 B Squadron Royal Canadian Dragoons" report compiled from Recce Squadron DSR by Lt Ben Gould. Cpl Gionet, Pte Dolmovic and Pte Renauld each received the Medal of Military Valour for their actions.
114. TF 1-07 DSR (11 April 2007). Note that TC-6 AT mines were supplied to the Mujahideen in quantity by the ISI who sourced them from Egypt who manufactured the TC-6 under licence from Italy in the 1980s.
115. TF 1-07 DSR (24 April 2007).

116. TF 1-07 DSR (30 April 2007).
117. Briefing to the author by STA Battery (Ma'Sum Ghar, 19 June 2007).
118. TF 1-07 DSR (19, 21, 24, 25 April,14, 17 May and 20 June 2007).
119. TF 1-07 DSR (17, 22 March 2007).
120. TF 1-07 DSR (5 April 2007).
121. TF 1-07 DSR (8 April 2007).
122. TF 1-07 DSR (5-6 April 2007).
123. OMLT DSR (1 April 2007).
124. PRT DSR (4 March 2007); KLE with Haji Baran (31 March 2007).
125. TF 1-07 DSR.
126. TF 1-07 "B Squadron Royal Canadian Dragoons" report compiled from Recce Squadron DSR by Lt Ben Gould (18 April 2007).
127. TF 1-07 DSR (16 April 2007).
128. TF 1-07 DSR (29 April 2007).
129. OMLT DSR (8 April 2007).
130. OMLT DSR (11 April 2007).
131. Telephone interview with Gavin Buchan (24 October 2011).
132. The author traveled to Spin Boldak on numerous occasions from 2003 to 2011. See also Graham interview.
133. Recce Squadron "Op SATYR NYX Phase I: Spin Boldak District Assessment" (15 June 2007).
134. Major Steve Graham briefing to 2 CMBG Professional Development Training (9 November 2007).
135. Ibid.; Graham interview.
136. Author's observations.
137. Recce Squadron "Op SATYR NYX Phase I: Spin Boldak District Assessment" (15 June 2007).
138. Ibid.
139. OMLT DSR (3 May 2007); Recce Squadron "Op SATYR NYX Phase I: Spin Boldak District Assessment" (15 June 2007).
140. Recce Squadron "Op SATYR NYX Phase I: Spin Boldak District Assessment" (15 June 2007).
141. This is based on the author's experiences in Spin Boldak during the course of the war.
142. NSE DSR (8 May 2007).
143. DOCS R&D Weekly Reports (2 May 2007).
144. Graham interview.
145. Ibid.
146. Library of Parliament, "Afghanistan: Chronology of Canadian Parliamentary Events" (20 November 2007); CBC News, "The Afghan Debate: Where the Parties Stand on the Deployment of Troops"; Hansard, 16 April 2007 (February 2008); www.ndp.ca "Debate Fact Check: Duceppe Wrong on NDP Afghan Vote."

147. Based on an analysis of the author's chronology of events for TF 1-07 (February–August 2007).

148. See Bruce Riedel, "Unraveling Al Qaeda's Plot Against Spain," Brookings Institution (7 August 2012), at http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2012/08/07-al-qaeda-spain-riedel.

149. CTV News "MPs Set to Debate Canada's Role in Afghanistan" (10 April 2006).

150. WikiLeaks, America Embassy Ottawa to State, "Canada: Making the Case for the Afghan Mission" (17 October 1997).

151. Interview with Major David Warnke (KAF, 8 February 2009); C-IED briefing (KAF, 8 August 2008).

152. C-IED briefing to the author, January 2008.

153. The suicide IED "chain" was related to me by Canadians who were present when Colonel Raziq captured a suicide bomber who tried to kill him in Spin Boldak. The failed bomber was feted at a dinner and he revealed how the system operated.

154. C-IED briefings to the author.

155. Warnke interview.

156. DOCS R&D Weekly Reports (17 May and 13 June 2007).

157. Kadi interview; DOCS R&D Weekly Reports (2 May 2007).

158. Interview with LCol Tom Bradley (Edmonton, 10 February 2010).

159. PRT DSR (2, 18 May 2007; 16 June 2007; 3 July 2007); JPCC DSR (4, 15, 30 May 2007; 20 June 2007, 5 July 2007).

160. JTF-A HQ "Operation BISSEL."

161. Ibid.

162. Author's observations of an intense discussion during a PRT Project Targeting Board meeting (15 June 2007).

163. J2 DSR (6 August 2007).

164. Telephone interview with Colonel Bob Chamberlain (16 November 2011).

165. Ibid.

166. PRT and JPCC DSR (19 March 2007; 17, 28 April 2007).

167. PRT and JPCC DSR (17 May 2007; 4, 18 June 2007; 1 August 2007); DCOS R&D Weekly Reports (13 June 2007).

168. DCOS R&D Weekly Reports (12 July 2007).

169. It was not clear who was behind this particular event. Amnesty International asserted that they had credible information that Governor Asadullah Khalid was somehow involved but has up to this point not yet elaborated why. See "Afghanistan: Defer Vote to Appoint Intelligence Director Accused of Torture," Amnesty International news (13 September 2012).

170. PRT DSRs.

171. DCOS R&D Weekly Reports (12 July 2007).

172. DCOS R&D Weekly Reports (19 July 2007).

173. Telephone interview with Colonel Chuck Mathé (28 February 2012).

174. Ibid.

175. Ibid.

176. “National Support Element R3 End Tour Report, 2007.” See also “Concept of Support” Graphic.
177. Mathé interview.
178. Ibid.
179. “National Support Element R3 End Tour Report, 2007.”
180. Mathé interview.
181. Ibid.
182. Ibid.
183. “J6 Brief on Comms for Theatre” (24 January 2007).
184. Military Police Complaints Commission, “Commission’s Final Report MPCC 2008-042 Concerning a complaint by Amnesty International Canada and British Columbia Civil Liberties Association in June 2008.”
185. I Coy DSR (13 April 2007).
186. TF 1-07 “Zharey District ANP” (10 June 2007).
187. TF 1-07 briefing to the author (Ma’Sum Ghar, 19 June 2007).
188. CIMIC briefing to the author (Patrol Base Wilson, 20 June 2007).
189. Storyboard, “Hotel Company TIC 07 May 2007”; TF 1-07 DSR (7 May 2007).
190. Storyboard, “Hotel Company TIC 08 May 2007.” TF 1-07 DSR (8 May 2007); OMLT DSR (9 May 2007).
191. TF 1-07 DSR (10, 11, 12 May 2007).
192. Briefing to the author (Ma’Sum Ghar, 21 June 2007).
193. Consolidated SITREP for Op HOOVER Phase 3 (Clear Sangsar West) (18 May 2007).
194. TF 1-07 DSR (19 May 2007).
195. TF 1-07 briefing to the author (Ma’Sum Ghar, 16 June 2007).
196. OMLT DSR (20 May 2007).
197. OMLT DSR (25 May 2007).
198. TF 1-07 DSR (25 May 2007).
199. TF 1-07 DSR; (31 May 2007) OMLT DSR (10, 31 May 2007).
200. TF 1-07 DSR (1,2 June 2007).
201. “Op TAKE OUT Consolidated SITREP 4 June 2007.”
202. TF 1-07 DSR (5, 6, 7 June 2007).
203. TF 1-07 DSR (7 June 2007).
204. “C/S 3 TIC Consolidated SITREP 12-13 June.”
205. I Company Post-Op Report, “Op SEQUEL.”
206. The author observed Op SEASONS alongside LCol Walker’s TAC HQ.
207. TF 1-07 DSR (24, 25 April 2007).
208. TF 1-07 DSR (5, 7 May 2007).

209. TF 1-07 DSR (9, 13 May 2007).
210. OMLT DSR (12, 14 May 2007).
211. OMLT DSR (15-16 May 2007).
212. OMLT DSR (16 May 2007).
213. TF 1-07 DSR (18 May 2007); OMLT DSR (18 May 2007).
214. OMLT DSR (23 May 2007); TF 1-07 DSR (31 May 2007); TF 1-07 DSR (1 June 2007).
215. Briefing to the author (Sperwan Ghar, 19 June 2007).
216. TF 1-07 DSR (1, 2 June 2007).
217. TF 1-07 DSR (2 June 2007).
218. TF 1-07 DSR (9 June 2007).
219. TF 1-07 DSR (10, 11, 12 June 2007).
220. TF 1-07 DSR (16 June 2007).
221. "KLE with Haji Baran" (1 June 2007).
222. Briefing to the author (Sperwan Ghar, 19 June 2007).
223. TF 1-07 DSR (4, 6 June 2007).
224. TF 1-07 DSR (25 June 2007).
225. JPCC DSR (12, 13 June 2007); OMLT DSR (13 June 2007).
226. Badal is the justice component of the Pashtunwali tribal code and when improperly implemented can degenerate into blood feuds.
227. TF 1-07 DSR (25 June 2007).
228. TF 1-07 DSR (19 June 2007).
229. TF 1-07 DSR (25 June 2007).
230. TF 1-07 DSR (23 June 2007).
231. DCOS R&D Weekly Reports (23-30 May 2007).
232. JPCC DSR (3, 5, 13 April 2007); DCOS R&D Weekly Reports (25 April 2007).
233. TF 1-07 DSR (27 May 2007); JPCC DSR (27 May 2007).
234. TF 1-07 DSR (29 May 2007).
235. KLE Report, "Security of SWK, Arghandab, Khakrez" (30 May 2007).
236. Ibid.
237. TF 1-07 DSR (2, 3, 4 June 2007); PRT DSR (5 June 2007).
238. TF 1-07 DSR (6 June 2007); "KLE- Shah Wali Kot District Centre" (6 June 2007).
239. JPCC DSR (8, 9, 10, 11 June 2007).
240. JPCC DSR (10 June 2007).
241. JTF-A "Op ADALAT Briefing" (12 July 2007).

242. JPCC DSR (17-18 June 2007).
243. KLE with Governor Asadullah Khalid (18 June 2007).
244. PRT DSR (19 June 2007).
245. JPCC DSR (20 June 2007).
246. OMLT DSR (20 June 2007).
247. OMLT DSR (20-27 June 2007).
248. FOB Khakrez SITREP (17 June 2007); FOB Khakrez SITREP (19 June 2007).
249. TF 1-07 POR, "Padah Engagement, 22 June 2007."
250. TF 1-07 DSR (24 June 2007).
251. DCOS R&D Weekly Reports (5 July 2007); JPCC DSR (28-30 June 2007).
252. JPCC DSR (6, 7, 12 July 2007).
253. OMLT DSR (17-27 July 2007).
254. TF 1-07 DSR (15 July 2007).
255. Chamberlain interview (Camp Nathan Smith, 9 June 2007).
256. PRT "KLE Report: Mullah Naquib" (23 July 2007).
257. Ibid.
258. Interview with Superintendent David Fudge (Camp Nathan Smith, 12 June 2007).
259. Interview with Major Bernard Hudson (Kingston, 3 July 2008).
260. JPCC DSR (16 June 2007).
261. JPCC DSR (20 February 2007).
262. Fudge interview; RPAC-South briefing to the author (February 2008). This is also in part based on the author's experiences with the PMT, callsign "MISFIT."
263. TF 1-07 DSR (2 July 2007).
264. "Op DRAGON Post Op Report" (3 July 2007).
265. TF 1-07 DSR (4 July 2007).
266. TF 1-07 files, "Statement of Events 4th July 2007."
267. TF 1-07 DSR (10-15 July 2007).
268. "Op PLUTO Post Op Report" (14 July 2007).
269. Ibid.
270. TF 1-07 DSR (14 July 2007).
271. "Op GALAXY Post Op Report" (17 July 2007).
272. TF 1-07 DSR (17 July 2007).
273. "Op MARS" (21 July 2007).

274. TF 1-07 DSR (22 July 2007).

275. TF 1-07 DSR (26 July 2007).

276. "Op MERCURY OC's Assessment" (18 July 2007). OMLT DSR (20 July 2007).

277. "AAR Op PORTER" (26 July 2007). JTF-A HQ DSR (26 July 2007).

278. "AAR Op PORTER" (26 July 2007).

279. "AAR Op PORTER" (26 July 2007). OMLT DSR (26 July 2007).

280. TF 1-07 DSR (21 July 2007).

281. TF 1-07 DSR (1, 2 August 2007).

BALANCING ACT ON THE ARGHANDAB:

AUGUST 2007–FEBRUARY 2008

The next iteration of TF Kandahar, unlike its predecessor, was not an ad hoc formation headquarters. BGen Guy Laroche and his team had time to structure their headquarters while they had a steady feed of information right up to their deployment in August 2007. This permitted constant adjustment to Roto 4's approach to Kandahar and also permitted the incorporation of crucial organizational changes to the new environment. Once on the ground, however, the pattern of activity proved to be very different to that encountered by the previous two rotations. As we will recall, CTF Aegis defined the problem in and around Kandahar with TF Orion in the lead and then shaped the conditions for Operation MEDUSA to deliver a body blow to the insurgent forces. TF Kandahar in early and mid-2007 exploited that shock effect to give itself space and time to define the development and governance "terrain" but then found itself engaged by an enemy who was in the process of adapting to the damage incurred by MEDUSA. Cumulatively, CTF Aegis under Fraser and TF Kandahar under Grant pushed the enemy into a particular course of action that was not their preferred one. In turn, it deflected the insurgent leadership from the trajectory they established in early 2006. Laroche's TF Kandahar came into play dealing with a somewhat disrupted and recovering enemy but one that remained lethal and agile.

The decision to base TF Kandahar Roto 4 on the Quebec-based 5e Groupe-brigade mécanisé du Canada came with substantial domestic political risk. Historically, the population in Quebec were not supportive of Canadian involvement in past overseas conflicts. There was a generalized belief that if this rotation took too many casualties it might give rise to demands for a Canadian withdrawal from Afghanistan in Quebec, in addition to similar demands voiced by the opposition parties in the House of Commons.[1] A lot was riding on this rotation and the pressure was on. Would "The Tabarnac Men" (as they were called by the Afghans at the PRT) be able to pull it off?[2]

A New Slant

BGen Laroche's TF Kandahar retained a structure similar to the earlier rotation: there was a battle group, a PRT, an OMLT, a NSE and intelligence enablers, including the ASIC. The TF 3-07 Battle Group was based around 3eR22R, led by LCol Alain Gauthier. Unlike previous battle groups, there were two infantry companies of four platoons each: B Company, led by Maj Dave Abboud, and C Company, led by Maj Patrick Robichaud.

A Company headquarters and a platoon's worth of soldiers were moved over to augment the OMLT. Recce Squadron came from 12 Régiment blindé du Canada (12 RBC) and was led by Maj Pierre Huet. C Squadron, led by Maj Trevor Gosselin, consisted of three tank troops drawn from all three armoured regiments. X Batterie, led by Maj D.W. Smith, grouped the former STA Battery and its resources (HALO, and lightweight counter mortar radar) with three troops of M-777 guns. The 53e Escadron, 5e Régiment du génie de combat (53e RGC), led by Maj Walter Taylor, was the combat engineer squadron. The counter-IED organizations overlapped with 53e Escadron and there was some evolution during late 2007 to sort out these relationships.

The OMLT changed hands and LCol Stéphane Lafaut took up the torch wielded by LCol Wayne Eyre. The OMLT's configuration remained the same, with Canadian mentors working with four of the five kandaks in 1-205 Brigade, plus mentors at brigade and corps levels. During Roto 4, 2nd Kandak entered the Red (leave and refit) and Yellow (training) cycles for three months, and 3rd Kandak went into the Green (conduct of operations) cycle.

The PRT remained under the command of LCol Bob Chamberlain, but his force protection company and CIMIC organization also rotated with 5 brigade-based sub-units. The NSE, now at a strength of 430 personnel, was commanded by LCol Nick Eldaoud. During the course of the rotation, each organization fielded a substantial amount and variety of new equipment, so the capabilities that existed in early 2007 were enhanced substantially by fall 2007. Canada still commanded the Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit, supplying 90 of its personnel as well as its commander LCol Pierre Charpentier. The ASIC was commanded by Maj Steve Desjardins.

TF Kandahar, however, differed from previous rotations in critical areas. There had been political and development advisors to the senior Canadian commanders in the past. With the increased emphasis by the Canadian government on generating visible and measurable development effects, the Political Advisor and Development Advisor also became links to, or representatives of, their parent organizations in Canada. When this proved problematic or complicated at the TF Kandahar level because of the confused relationships between the Kabul embassy, SAT-A and the PRT, a retired diplomat, Michel de Salaberry, was brought in late in 2007 to act as a focal point for DFAIT and CIDA activities in Kandahar. This would eventually lead to a greater rationalization of the Army–Other Government Departments (OGD) relationship in the next rotation under TF Kandahar, led by BGen Denis Thompson, but for the time being in mid-2007, the situation was as ambiguous as the relationship was ambivalent.

Similarly, there were unspoken expectations that were communicated from Ottawa via CEFCOM to TF Kandahar. Canada had 18 months to make a real difference, given the 2009 withdrawal date. Casualties were to be minimized. More emphasis was to be made on training the Afghan security forces. Canada had to be seen to be increasingly involved in development.[3]

This increased emphasis on development, particularly the central role of infrastructure reconstruction and development in the districts, led to some reorganization of engineering at the TF Kandahar level. The previous TF Kandahar had downplayed centralized engineering structures. Whether this was due to inter-arm politics or to the usual manpower caps and competition for positions remains unclear, but the Laroche-led headquarters displayed an evolution of opinion as the tour progressed. First, an Engineer Support Unit was established under TF Kandahar to provide relief to 53e Escadron when it came to non-combat infrastructure tasks in forward operating bases. Second, as operations progressed in the districts by late 2007, the need for a protected construction engineer capability was also identified: this became the Construction Management Organization. In time, the task force Engineer Advisor position expanded to handle this and the expansion of counter-IED capability and became known as the Force Engineering Office.[4]

The area that evolved significantly with this headquarters was in effects coordination. The concepts of kinetic and non-kinetic effects and the idea that they could and should be coordinated was not new to Canadians in Afghanistan, as we have seen going back to Operation APOLLO. In most cases, the concept of coordinated effects was something unseen and unsaid, yet understood. By 2007, the further the Canadians drilled down into district-level politics the more complexity emerged, and this in turn demanded a refined approach. The Grant TF Kandahar was blessed with personnel who had experience in tracking Kandahar politics and could build on the data generated by CTF Aegis, TF Orion, 1 RCR Battle Group and the PRTs. When those personnel went home, however, there were problems with continuity in what was now starting to be called "White Situational Awareness" (White SA, as opposed to "Red" SA, or the enemy's activities). The incoming units had to start from scratch and develop their own relationships with Afghans.

Attempts by the van Loon led Regional Command (South) headquarters to understand Afghan tribal and political dynamics led to the creation of Operation SATYR DEUCALION in December 2006, right before Operation BAAZ TSUKA. The idea that systematic contact with Afghan power brokers would lead to increased understanding and thus would open doors to increased influence on the situation was attractive to the Laroche TF Kandahar as it trained in early 2007. As a result, more attention was paid to folding White SA into the formal planning process.

The Laroche TF Kandahar had a Joint Effects Coordinating Board and an Effects Synchronization Meeting. The objective of these organizations, according to a jargon-free briefing, was to identify for the TF Kandahar Commander:[5]

- What should we whack or influence?
- What happens if we whack this?
- What should we whack with?
- Go forth and whack it!
- Did we whack it good?
- Did we do good by whacking it?

In this case, the thing to be "whacked" or influenced included the insurgents and the Kandahar power structure. The Laroche headquarters understood that the two audiences overlapped in some areas and only careful targeting could bring about the effects needed to support Canadian objectives without jeopardizing success in other areas. The Joint Effects Coordinating Board determined these priorities, but the Effects Synchronization Meeting looked at how they would be implemented. There were four verbs associated with that process: define, convince, influence and neutralize. The tools used could include a key leader engagement; it could involve meetings or liaison at the JPCC; or perhaps special operations forces conducting full spectrum capture-kill operations. The process gave the TF Kandahar commander the ability to use a scalpel instead of a sword when the sword was not required.[6]

Crucial to all of this was the fact that Canada was trying to maintain insight and influence in Kandahar Province in the shadow of a Regional Command (South) headquarters, now led by Maj.-Gen. David "Jacko" Page. Canadian salience into these types of operations was necessary not only from a national prestige perspective within the coalition and when dealing with the Afghans, but for practical domestic political considerations. It forced the issue of influence in esoteric circles like the "black" world of the special operations forces, where the objective was to make it less likely that Canada would be left holding the bag if uncoordinated operations killed the wrong people. Given the domestic climate in Canada, these organizations and processes were of vital strategic importance.

The increase in the numbers of coalition special operations forces organizations in southern Afghanistan, some with competing or overlapping mandates, meant that there were a lot of "men in black" from different countries gearing up to capture-kill enemy leadership targets. Regional Command (South) headquarters had the Kandahar Fusion Centre colocated with it. It was run by Operation ENDURING FREEDOM but included ISAF liaison officers. Canada was represented in the Kandahar Fusion Centre and having a Canadian deputy commander at Regional Command (South), MGen Marquis Hainse, certainly did not hurt either.[7]

It is unclear as to whether the Laroche TF Kandahar had a better or worse relationship with Canadian SOF. The Grant TF Kandahar got along with American special forces better than it did with Canadian SOF but this was based more on previous personal relationships than anything else. In a general sense, Canadian SOF in Afghanistan at this time suffered from the lack of internal mobility, specifically helicopters, which reduced its ability to rapidly react to a developing target. This forced Canadian SOF to focus on Kandahar City to some extent. At least five successful special operations forces strikes against enemy leaders occurred from August to December 2007 in the Canadian area of operation outside of the city: one by the Afghan National Army and the OMLT, one by U.S. Special Forces, and three from an unidentified non-Canadian organization.[8]

Changes to the ASIC during this rotation significantly improved the care and feeding of the TF Kandahar "systems." There was an even greater operational and tactical focus than the previous three Kandahar-based ASICs, which, as we have seen, were hampered by the priority to feed Ottawa in competition with supporting the battle group and PRT. The philosophy in the new ASIC was to make it an "intelligence NSE" and focus on the commander's intent rather than act as a way station for information headed home to Canada. The ASIC was also reorganized during its tour. The Mission Support Group and the Field Security Group were brought under one roof and the amount of processed human intelligence quadrupled from the previous rotation. The ASIC also established stronger links with the various Canadian and allied counter-IED organizations, which, over time, had a significant effect on targeting insurgent bomb makers and their networks.[9]

New Plans: From Operation SATYR PERSEUS to Operation SHA AYENDA

For the Laroche iteration of TF Kandahar, the higher planning framework outwardly looked like the previous one. The ANDS remained in the driver's seat, while Operation ARGUS RESOLVE Operation OQAB, the ADZ strategy, remained on the books. In Regional Command (South), Operation SATYR PERSEUS was the baseline operation plan.

When Maj.-Gen. "Jacko" Page and his British-led headquarters took over from the van Loon headquarters in May 2007, however, what was done in the name of the plans and how this related to the Canadian effort changed significantly.

Canadian officers assigned to Regional Command (South) noted, with alarm, numerous deficiencies and problems with the new command. A senior Canadian reported that Page was "abusive," that the headquarters was structurally "dysfunctional" and was overly compartmentalized. Canada, a number of officers believed, was "marginalized" by Page and the British officers he brought with him. The focus for Regional Command (South) was exclusively oriented toward Helmand Province, and Page, according to one officer, "became fixated on Musa Qala" over in Helmand Province. Indeed, the rationale for emphasis on Musa Qala was not clear to Canadian officers, who in turn resisted Page's attempts to draw more and more Canadian resources to Helmand. Laroche refused to deploy to Helmand unless he was given a better understanding as to why Musa Qala had a higher priority over Kandahar. The information provided to him did not satisfy Laroche.[10]

The effects of this state of affairs, coupled with other external factors, led TF Kandahar to formulate its own baseline operations plan while it was deploying in mid- to late August 2007. BGen Laroche relied heavily on his planning staff, particularly LCol Claude Fournier and Maj Eric Landry, to react rapidly to the turbulent situation.[11] They could not fall back completely on the Grant headquarters plan. After intense discussions with his civilian counterparts on the Executive Steering Committee, Commander CEFCOM, LGen Mike Gauthier, directed TF Kandahar to work more closely with the OGDs in order to "synchronize whole-of-government effects within Afghanistan." At the same time, TF Kandahar was instructed to shift from conducting operations with Afghan security forces to supporting Afghan security forces. SAT-A was supposed to become "more responsive" to "whole-of- government direction."[12]

These changes were extremely important ones. Recall the problems encountered in gaining CIDA assistance and coordination with the Army back in 2002 and Operation APOLLO and in 2003–2004 in Operation ATHENA in Kabul. Recall also the pressures encountered by the Government of Canada regarding criticism that there was too much fighting in Afghanistan and not enough development. Commander CEFCOM pressured TF Kandahar to be seen to be making a difference to Ottawa and the broader Canadian audience.[13]

The new plan was called Operation SHA AYENDA [Better Future]. SHA AYENDA's depiction of the enemy's objectives was an improvement over previous baseline plans. The planners clearly stated that the Taliban's intent was "To re-establish a legitimate Taliban government in the Pashtun belt within Afghanistan." Previously, the enemy's objectives depicted in baseline plans was based on the vague concept that they were merely against something as opposed to for something. According to SHA AYENDA, the enemy had four lines of effort:

1. cause the coalition forces to leave Afghanistan;

2. have the Afghan people support and/or comply with the Taliban;

3. have the people oppose the Government of Afghanistan; and

4. retain an external haven and external support.

Their methodology, again according to SHA AYENDA, was to impose "unacceptable costs to [coalition] nations in terms of casualties and resources" while "undermining the national confidence in our ability to win" and "convincing people that the Taliban is the only viable alternative." Erosion of Canadian and Afghan public confidence in the Government of Afghanistan was a crucial part of the enemy agenda. Retaining safe havens in Quetta, Waziristan, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, and the Northwest Frontier Province was as critical to the insurgency as retaining external supply lines from Pakistani Pashtuns, rogue Pakistani elements, the Iranian government, Gulf country financial support and Al Qaeda global extremist network.[14]

SHA AYENDA accepted, for planning purposes, that the ADZ strategy was still in play in Kandahar, though the term was used less and less at TF Kandahar as time rolled on and Page's Regional Command (South) appeared to have jettisoned the concept altogether. However, by early January 2008, "expanding the ADZ" was still being used as an operational-level justification for activities in TF Kandahar planning documents. SHA AYENDA focused solely on five districts: Zharey, Panjwayi, Shah Wali Kot, Arghandab and Spin Boldak. The objective of the plan was to meet several district-level objectives in those areas by May 2008.[15]

In Zharey and Panjwayi, TF Kandahar wanted a consistently secure and stable environment. The Afghan security forces were to operate autonomously, local governance was connected to the Kandahar government, and non-governmental organizations could conduct humanitarian operations in the districts. In Arghandab and Shah Wali Kot, efforts were to be made toward restoring the Dahla Dam in a secure environment. Displaced persons were to be able to return and local economies benefit from the dam. A forward operating base with an Afghan force would maintain security. As for Spin Boldak, Canada was supposed to "encourage" the "licit economy."[16]

SHA AYENDA used the same lines of operation, security, governance and development, as previous plans did in the Grant and Fraser headquarters. Existing PRT plans and programming were to continue but now had to be "aligned and prioritized with JTF-A intent."[17] The scheme of manoeuvre that TF Kandahar planned to use to attain objectives

in these lines of operation was called by the Laroche headquarters "Clear-Hold-Develop" or "Clear-Hold-Stabilize."[18] Based on the "Clear-Hold-Build" concept articulated earlier in 2006, and later by CEFCOM planners in 2007 when the NATO and Canadian campaign plans were under revision, the general idea was that "mowing the lawn" or "emptying the garbage" vis-à-vis the enemy forces in the districts was repetitive and led only to disruption operations, not reconstruction and development. The only way development resources and monies could flow to the district and community levels was to have the police secure the area, make contact with the people, generate security, and then enable district leaders to hold shuras, conduct development assemblies and activate community committees.[19]

What the larger SHA AYENDA plans did not state in so many words was that BGen Laroche wanted to shift Canadian forces out of Zharey and Panjwayi by December and move them to Shah Wali Kot after turning the two districts over to the Afghan security forces. Canada could then be seen to be making progress.[20]

The Nature of the Insurgency in Kandahar Province, June–December 2007

Canadian analysis of the insurgent threat in Kandahar Province in the latter half of 2007 revolved around the belief that there were separate insurgent groups operating in each conflicted district. These groups were supported from the outside with fighters and leaders from Helmand Province and Pakistan, depending on the time of the year, and weapons and supplies brought in from outside sources (see Figure 2-1). Structurally, local men with leadership skills and charisma led the district groups, and they could conduct ambushes and indirect fire missions but were reliant on specialists from outside to provide them with IED expertise. To a great extent, the insurgency played off of grievances generated between local people and the provincial government. There appeared to be tentative moves toward mutually supporting operations. The district-level groups communicated but rarely coordinated.[21]

The insurgents in Ghorak and Maywand focused on harassing the district centres, while those in Khakrez had a live-and-let-live relationship with what amounted to the district-level government.[22] In upper Shah Wali Kot, the insurgent groups had an economic relationship with Matiullah Khan, the strongman from Oruzgan who handled the Tarinkot Road with his own mercenary security force, the Kandak Amniante Uruzgan. The Dutch and Australians had a relationship with Matiullah, who ensured that the local Taliban groups did not interfere with ISAF logistic convoys.[23] Lower Shah Wali Kot was subjected to radio propaganda, abductions and other localized intimidation.

Arghandab was a tough nut for the insurgents to crack. The Alikozai militia, the Afghan National Auxiliary Police, and the strong leadership of those associated with Mullah Naqib ensured that the insurgents did not operate from that district, though they likely transited it from time to time for a fee.[24]

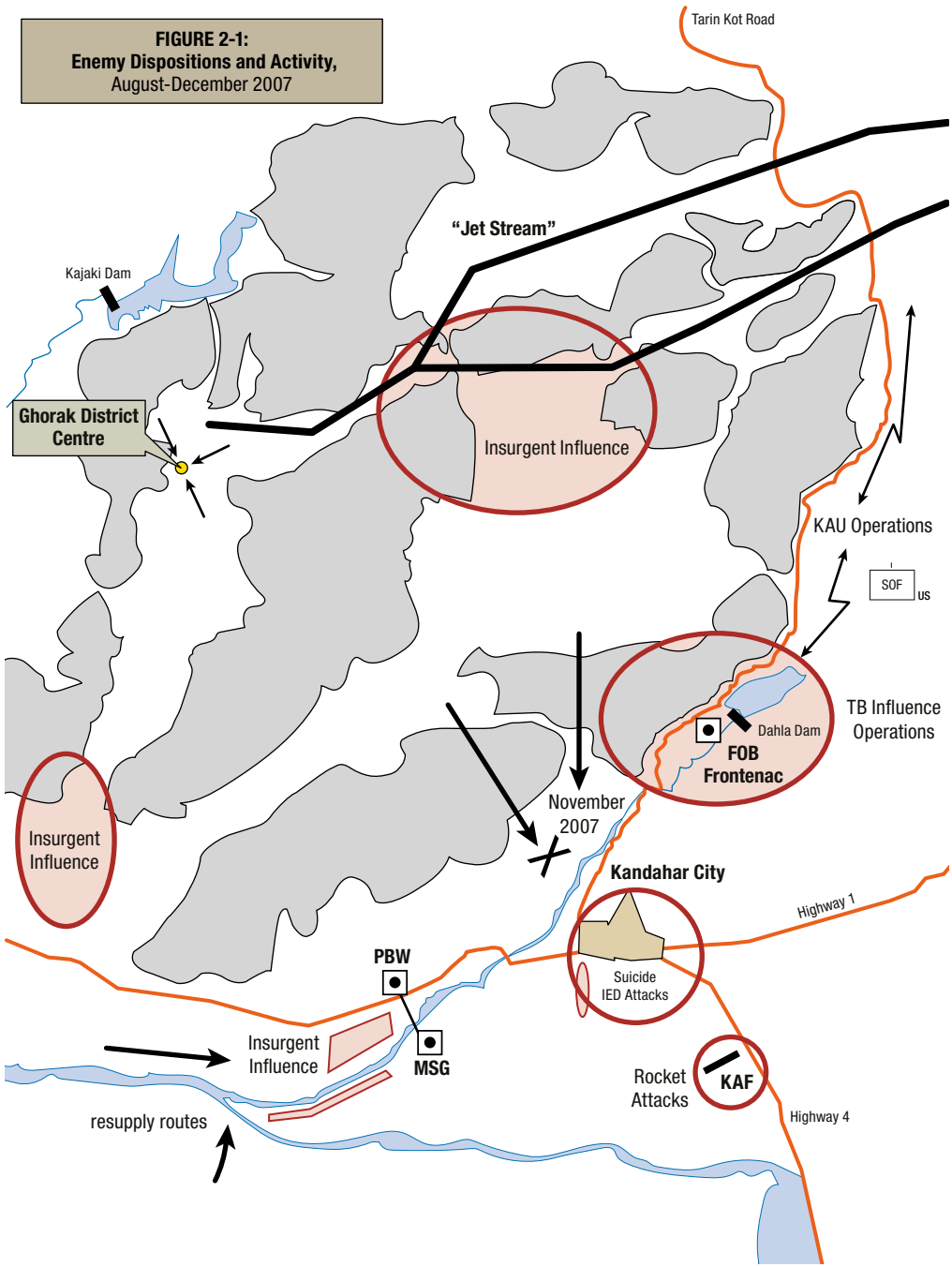


Figure 2-1: Enemy Dispositions and Activity, August-December 2007

Kandahar City was a special case and was essentially an urban terrorist operating area where the focus was suicide terrorism and IED activity. The rabbit warren nature of District 9 and its virulent mosques made it an ideal bed-down area for commanders and individual fighters transiting in from Spin Boldak via commercial transport. District 6 in the southwest was a logistics transfer node connected to the ratline that went through Panjwayi District to Maywand and then Helmand, or into the Reg Desert from Panjwayi where non-ideologically motivated smugglers assisted whoever paid them.[25]

Maruf and Arghistan were resupply routes to Kandahar City and to the northeast "rocket box" that periodically hosted "non-insurgent insurgents" who were paid money by the Taliban and perhaps other entities to fire 107mm rockets at KAF. The two districts acted as bed-down areas for foreign fighters coming in from Pakistan. Special operations forces disruption operations resulted in a cat-and-mouse game in those districts as the enemy tried to avoid Col. Abdul Raziq's private war in Spin Boldak.[26]

As for Zharey and western Panjwayi, the insurgency was pressurized by the new strong points and police substations. These reduced freedom of movement but the insurgents continued to lash out like animals in a cage against the new facilities and against targets on Highway 1. The insurgent groups south of Route Fosters in Panjwayi west started to react to the security forces' presence with ambushes and IEDs in an effort to break the chain. Nahlgam was the centre of the enemy effort to retain a presence in the western part of both districts.[27]

Hard Into Zharey District: August 2007

Concurrent with SHA AYENDA planning was another planning cycle that emerged in August. While TF Kandahar was sorting out its conceptual framework, LCol Gauthier and the 3 R22eR Battle Group were in the process of recovering from a disruptive relief in place. Though the transfer of authority from Grant to Laroche took place on 2 August, it was not until 11 August that LCol Rob Walker handed over battle group transfer of authority to Gauthier. Maj Robichaud's C Company paired with Maj David Quick's I Company and the Afghan National Army for familiarization operations in Zharey starting on 1 August. As other units flowed in, they did not arrive complete, so a one-for-one replacement of sub-units was not possible. Planned operations were cancelled or pushed to the right. By 3 August, TF Kandahar accepted the fact that the "security situation in Zharey District is a concern as the [relief in place] may provide an opportunity for the enemy to surge."[28] In part, this was due to incoming Canadians having problems with acclimatization, which forced TF Kandahar to reduce the number of its planned presence and disrupt operations. As the counter-IED organization had to rotate as well, in-theatre IED training slowed down.[29] This produced a lull in patrolling coverage in Zharey and Panjwayi Districts.[30]

TF Kandahar, in the commander's view, needed to relieve the pressure on Zharey and regain the initiative. At the same time, a security meeting with Asadullah Khalid and General Saqib revealed that they thought "security in Zharey was slipping away." Their idea was to redistribute checkpoints in Zharey and Panjwayi and reassert control through them.[31] The need to handle these challenges resulted in Operations MALDAR and GARRANDAY ZMARAY.

The new Regional Command (South) under Maj.-Gen. "Jacko" Page earmarked a British light infantry battalion as the Regional Command (South) reserve. Dubbed the Regional Battle Group (South), a variety of British light infantry units rotated in and out of the role. BGen Laroche put in a request for the Regional Battle Group (South) to deploy into Maywand District to support Operation MALDAR with the objective of disrupting enemy activity. A platoon from Maj Abboud's B Company, 3 R22eR and a troop of tanks from Maj Dave Broomfield's A Squadron, plus X Batteries' M-777 guns were to assist 1st Battalion, The Royal Welch Fusiliers in this effort starting 14 August. TUAV coverage was also expanded over to Maywand District. MALDAR produced no enemy contact but allowed the incoming Canadians to acquaint themselves with Maywand District.

The Afghan government's plans for re-examining security in Zharey District influenced Operation SHA AYENDA while it was being formulated by the TF Kandahar staff, but it was clear that a separate implementation plan was necessary as it was a discrete part of a larger, province-wide plan. Operation GARRANDAY ZMARAY was the result. Discussions with the Afghans on 4 August evolved into a formal planning process between 6 and 10 August, with a planned start date of 1 September.[32]

Out in the field, however, the situation in Zharey was seriously deteriorating (see Figure 2-2). On the nights of 6 and 7 August, almost all of the existing Afghan police checkpoints in Zharey came under small-arms fire. LCol Walker launched B Company down Highway 1 to Howz-e Madad to shore up the position there and to make contact with the other Afghan police checkpoints in the vicinity (Operation CARIBOU). When B Company moved its LAV IIIs south of Howz-e Madad, they encountered heavy direct and indirect fire from the Ghundy Ghar feature and were forced to withdraw. The police, it turned out, were gone and the enemy now controlled Gundy Ghar.[33] Ghundy Ghar is the primary high ground in western Zharey District, much like Sperwan Ghar is in Panjwayi District. Successful security operations in the district were simply not possible if the enemy controlled Ghundy Ghar.

To make matters worse, enemy harassing fire on the New Lakokhel police checkpoint increased and insurgents overran the position on 14 August. Three days later, an unusually large IED blew up an A Squadron TLAV, flipping it onto its side. Over in Panjwayi, Checkpoints 5 and 10 near Sperwan Ghar came under direct fire. To make the point that

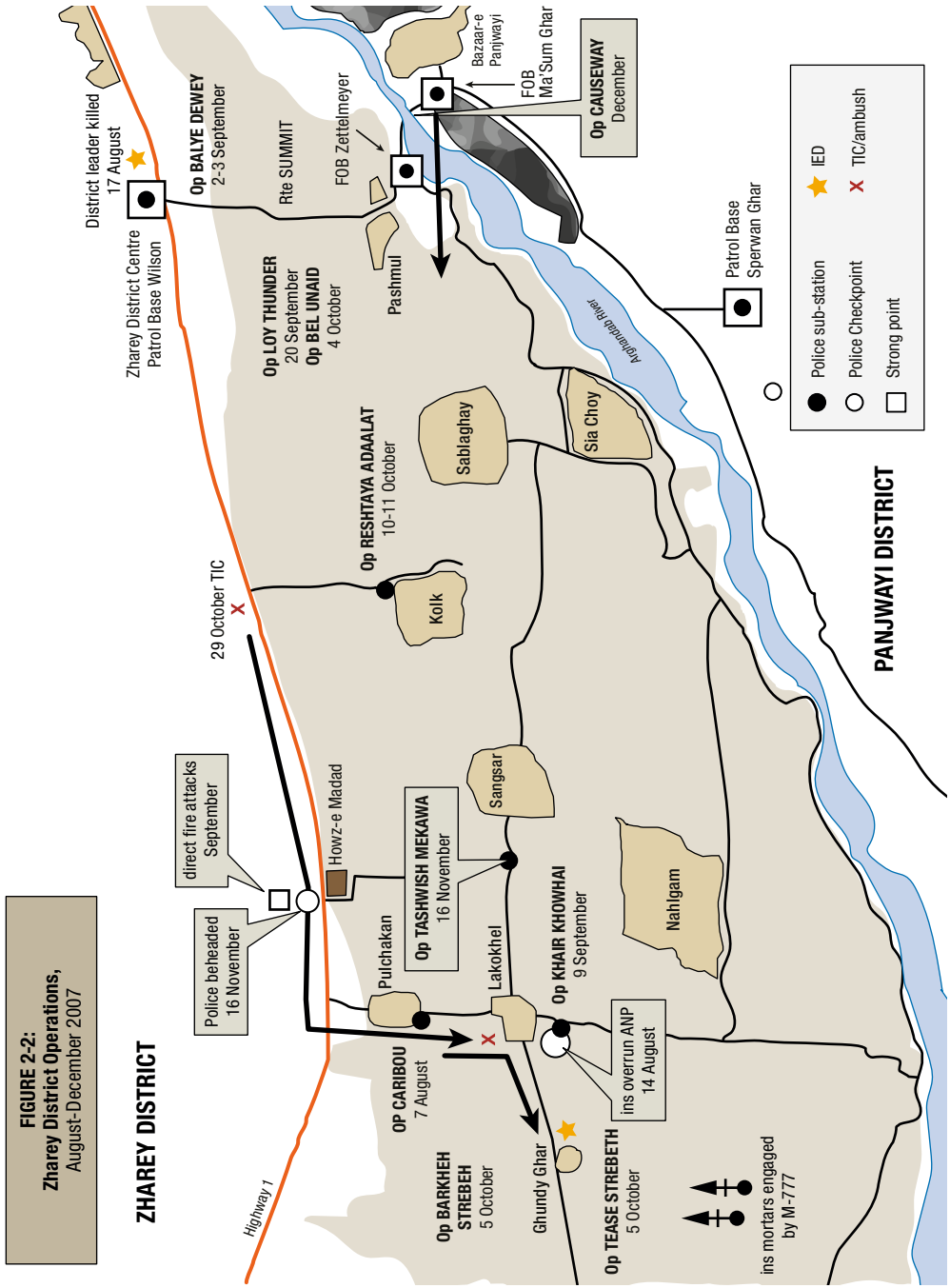


Figure 2-2: Zharey District Operations, August-December 2007

supply lines were vulnerable, a combat logistics patrol wound up in a sustained ambush on Route Fosters East. Five palletized loading system trucks escorted by three RG-31s and a Bison ECM vehicle headed east toward Kandahar. The lead RG-31 was targeted by an IED, which caused no damage. The convoy pressed on and 12 kilometres later, another IED attack took place, blowing up the RG-31 and wounding five soldiers.[34] A separate IED attack on Fosters East, this one against C Company, struck a LAV III, killing Pte Simon Longtin on 19 August.

The Zharey District leadership was neutralized on 17 August when a suicide bomber in a white Corolla killed the notoriously corrupt Haji Khairuddin and his three children. Another attack, preceded by a taunting cell phone call, nearly succeeded in killing Col. Akka, the Zharey District police chief.[35] Three Afghan police officers were kidnapped from the Howz-e Madad checkpoint and beheaded. Col. Akka responded with an operation of his own and bagged a local Taliban commander.[36]

At the time, it appeared that this was an escalation in insurgent violence in the district but, in retrospect, there is a possibility that rival leader Habibullah Jan played some supportive role in these events. Earlier that day, Governor Asadullah Khalid decided to remove all of Habibullah Jan's checkpoints in neighbouring Senjaray as a prelude to Operation GARRANDAY ZMARAY but did not remove Col. Akka's, so it remains possible that insurgents were "facilitated" into the area with help from the Senjaray power structure. At the same time, Habibullah Jan despised Khairuddin because of his connections to Ahmad Wali Karzai and he would not have shed tears at his demise either. In any event, Zharey District was now thoroughly destabilized.

Operation BARKHEH STERBEH [Eagle Eye] was the temporary answer. At this point LCol Gauthier had taken over from LCol Walker. To distract enemy attention, LCol Gauthier sent Maj Robichaud and C Company with a troop of Leopards from A Squadron down Fosters West on 22 August. They manoeuvred into three positions opposite the river from Sia Choy, with ISTAR resources focused on the area. At the same time, he sent a combat team led by Maj. Abboud supported by an NSE echelon south of Howz-e Madad, and then down Routes Edmonton and Ottawa. This combat team also had Afghan National Army and OMLT participation, as well as police with American police mentors. The OMLT was in the process of breaking in 3rd Kandak a unit that in the mentors' view, was "spoon-fed by American and [Dutch] forces, getting almost any equipment and funding they requested for projects. It is a slow road to get them to…realize that we are here to provide them mentoring and help develop sustainable infrastructure that will last once coalition forces are no longer in Afghanistan."[37]

B combat team encountered sustained RPG and mortar fire as it moved along Edmonton and Ottawa. B Company's LAVs opened fire with 25mm fire while the Sperwer TUAV and a SUAV, launched from X Batterie, attempted to locate the mortar positions. F-15 and A-10 close air support arrived to take out insurgents manoeuvring toward the incursion force. X Batterie engaged the mortars with 155mm fire. Across the river, C Company combat team was engaged by enemy RPG and 82mm teams but was able to identify and destroy all of them with 105mm fire from the Leopard's guns, 25mm cannon fire from the LAV-III's. There were an estimated 30 enemy killed in three engagements. The same scenario repeated itself in all three of C Company's manoeuvre positions, with an estimated 20 enemy killed for a total of 50 estimated insurgents eliminated.[38]

Photo Credit: Author

The vital Gundy Ghar feature in western Zharey District was the scene of tragedy during the relief in place conducted between the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment and 1er Bataillon du 22e Régiment Battle Groups in August 2007. This is Gundy Ghar from the west.

The fighting lasted all day on 22 August. By late afternoon, B Company combat team arrived at Ghundy Ghar, with the Leopards taking up positions on the high ground. The experienced armoured soldiers, having survived nearly six months of hard operations in Afghanistan, knew enough not to move around too much as the area was potentially riddled

with IEDs. Rollers and ploughs beat and carved the ground up enough to manoeuvre on lanes until the place was cleared by 53e Escadron combat engineers. When B Company's LAV IIIs arrived on the position, however, their crews were not *au courant* with keeping on the cleared path and a LAV III hit an IED, disabling it. A second LAV III struck an IED as it manoeuvred around the switchbacks up the hill. This device killed MWO Mario Mercier, MCpl Christian Duchesne, and an Afghan interpreter, who later passed away at the Role 3 hospital.[39] UH-60 medical evacuation helicopters arrived to extract the dead and wounded.

The next day, a Coyote surveillance troop from Maj Huet's Recce Squadron arrived to take over the Ghundy Ghar feature and Abboud's combat team withdrew. The MEWTs and a variety of other resources were busy collecting on enemy movements that were stimulated by Operation BARKHEH STERBEH. A direct action conducted by special operations forces nabbed a seven-man IED facilitation cell as a result.[40] Maj Taylor from 53e Escadron looked at the resupply route from Ghundy Ghar to Highway 1 and, in discussions with PRT CIMIC, came to the following conclusion:

> JTF-A should buy a used paving machine to build roads fast [where they are] needed for force protection in areas where contractors cannot or want not to operate….Security forces need to establish the security before reconstruction is done and ISAF cannot establish security unless a presence is created (thus the need for paved roads). If ISAF had the capacity to pave roads for security reasons, the reconstruction would happen faster because the security would be created faster.[41]

Four days after the operation, the Taliban's 82mm mortars started up against FOB Ghundy Ghar. The same day, insurgent RPG teams attacked Ma'Sum Ghar and this was followed by a 107mm rocket attack at night. X Batterie destroyed the mortar with 155mm fire directed by HALO sound ranging data, while the Leopard tanks in run-up positions used HESH rounds to kill the insurgent RPG teams.[42] These attacks repeated themselves on 1 and 2 September, though the volume of enemy fire against Ghundy Ghar was considerably greater. Recce Squadron's patrols outside the base clearly disturbed the enemy and this was their response. HALO and Lightweight Counter Mortar Radar systems were used to locate the offending mortar positions, which were subsequently engaged and destroyed with 155mm fire and close air support directed by the joint terminal air controllers accompanying Recce Squadron.[43]

Photo Credit: Author

Lightweight counter mortar radar systems, like this one seen in 2010 at Operation CLIFF in eastern Panjwayi District, assisted the M-777 battery with fire missions against insurgent mortar and rocket positions. Fake LCMRs were also deployed by the Canadians to deceive insurgent fire control teams that had Pakistani Army training and understood what the detections systems were capable of.

The first weeks were hard ones for the 3 R22eR Battle Group. With three dead and over ten wounded in such a short period, one would have expected mass demonstrations in the streets of Quebec City calling for Canadian withdrawal from Afghanistan. This did not happen and the pundits were wrong. Quebecers were not the weak link that some anticipated. That weak link was elsewhere. The fight was back on in Zharey, but without police to hold positions in the district, it started to look like "emptying the garbage" all over again.

Operation GARRANDAY ZMARAY, August–September 2007

In order to move the Canadian battle group elsewhere, it was necessary to ensure that the Afghans could take control of Zharey District. This meant coordinating the Afghan army, Afghan police, and engaging the Governor and the Kandahar power structure, which of course took time. Operation GARRANDAY ZMARAY's initial concept of operations was to re-establish control over the district with a web of strong points from which security would emanate. Note that this approach was not new as the previous task force worked toward that end but were thwarted with the lack of trained and effective police and were being undermined by those involved in district-level governance.

The GARRANDAY ZMARAY plan was not a purely Canadian project. In August, Governor Asadullah Khalid drew out 16 police checkpoints on a napkin during a security meeting. The sketch was passed around and refined with police input. When it made its way to the Afghan army, Lt.-Col. Sherin Shah added 15 more possible checkpoints to the chart along Route Langley. General Saqib, the police chief for the province, believed Nahlgam should be isolated, so that was included too. TF Kandahar planners took all of this away, rationalized it, and briefed it back to the Afghans on 22 August.[44]

The idea now was to progressively establish six strong points (see Figure 2-3) starting with the newly retaken Ghundy Ghar, then alternating between Highway 1 and the district interior.[45] In theory, these actions would move the enemy away from Highway 1, reduce police corruption along Highway 1 and build confidence with the population. Later on, GARRANDAY ZMARAY was expanded to include a progressive line of strong points extending from Bazaar-e Panjwayi to Mushan. As the plan evolved yet again into fall, the idea that a paved road to connect Bazaar-e Panjwayi to Mushan then crossing the Arghandab River and heading north to Highway 1 near Ghundy Ghar emerged within the planning staff. The concept of isolating the insurgent stronghold in Nahlgam by surrounding it was one motivation underlying the planning, but another lay in the possibility of improving the economy by permitting better access to markets outside of the district.[46]

The issue was now who, exactly, would man these strong points. When the issue was raised by the OMLT with 3rd Kandak, the Afghans did not like the idea of occupying defensive infrastructure in two districts with a single kandak. It took a lot of convincing to get the Afghan army leadership to move a company to Howz-e Madad.[47] As we saw in the last chapter, the Afghan police situation was in shambles. The Americans finally stepped in and developed a response to the German failure after the Dubai meetings in summer. Kandahar policing support was still a "Tower of Babel" that TF Kandahar had to manoeuvre around. To get the trained personnel needed for Operation GARRANDAY ZMARAY, TF Kandahar had to deal with a web of coalition policing support agencies: European Police, U.S. Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) and DynCorp, as well as several Afghan police forces. This meant harnessing and then coordinating a variety of TF Kandahar resources: Canadian civilian police and the Specialist Engineer Team at the PRT, the JPCC at the Palace, Maj Michel Zybala's Military Police Company, and Jon Davison from DFAIT.

The prime complicating factors were the Police Mentoring Teams and the provincial mentors. The Police Mentoring Teams were U.S. Army National Guard infantry and Military Police re-roled as police mentors. It was a lash-up attempt by CSTC-A to create something akin to a "P-OMLT." DynCorp, for example, could not leave its training bases because of life insurance policy restrictions, and the Americans could not work out

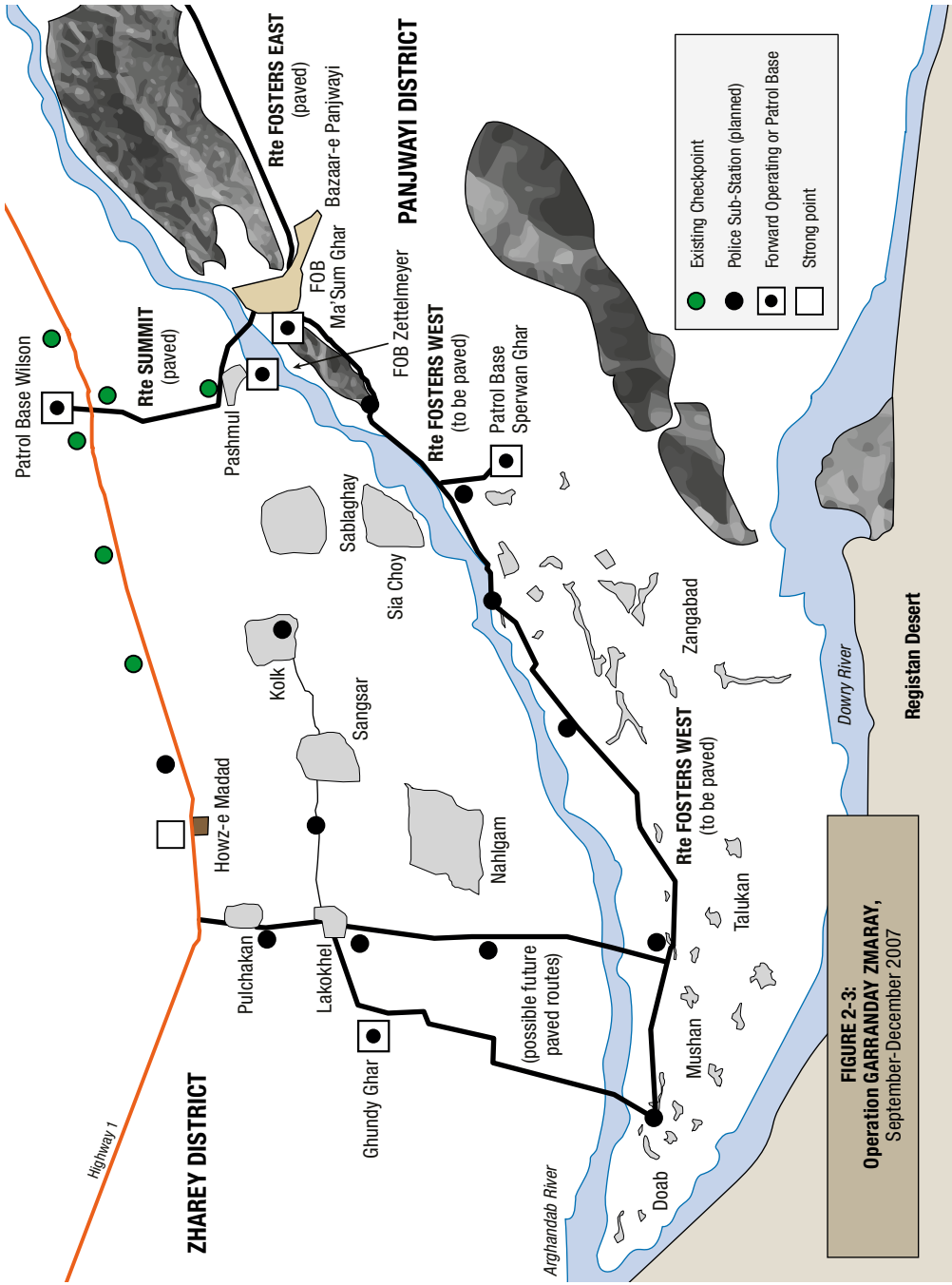


FIGURE 2-3:
Operation GARRANDAY ZMARAY,
September-December 2007

Figure 2-3: Operation GARRANDAY ZMARAY, September-December 2007

a myriad of complex funding issues. The Canadian CIVPOL from the PRT wanted to mentor the Afghans in the field, but Ottawa limited their "outside the wire" activities to reduce risk. The Police Mentoring Teams were going to handle that activity but they were mobile teams that returned to base at night and did not live with the Afghans in the way the OMLTs did. The American police mentors, furthermore, were not an ISAF resource: they belonged to Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. The Police Mentoring Teams in Kandahar in 2007 were not shy about throwing that in Canadian commanders' faces when matters of coordination came up. In some cases, the police mentors went off with the U.S. Army special forces looking for action using their Afghan police as the "Afghan face." In the senior provincial mentor's view, he did not think that static police mentoring in support of the static array of police sub-stations was the direction to take because, in his view, this was how the French lost Indochina. Once again, the issue of whether the Afghan police should be a gendarmerie, a militia, or beat cops still was not sorted out.[48]

In a nutshell, any Afghan police going into the strong points in Zharey and Panjwayi had to be mentored in place. The Police Mentor Teams were doing their own thing elsewhere. The regional training centre only took the Afghan police so far in their training: They needed combat survival training to augment it. Nobody seemed to have resources to do this. The solution, therefore, was the Police Operational Mentor Liaison Team (P-OMLT). TF Kandahar looked to its internal resources. There was a military police platoon at the PRT, but from the previous rotation, it was clear that the Canadian CIVPOL wanted to run its own show in the city and in any event TF Kandahar planners thought that they were being used solely as armed escorts to the Canadian CIVPOL. There was even a battle group Military Police section. There were, according to BGen Laroche, far too many Military Police officers handing out speeding tickets on KAF. By the end of August, six "mobile mentoring teams" of seven personnel each were formed from these resources and turned over to the OMLT for administrative and command purposes with the understanding they would work in the newly established police bases alongside the Afghan police. Maj Louis Lapointe was eventually put in command and the first P-OMLT stood up on 6 September.[49]

As for those strong points, there were problems funding their construction.TF Kandahar could divert Canadian combat and construction engineering resources to build them, but there were material costs involved as the bases had to be defensible positions and not like the previous "cop in a box" concept employed earlier in 2007. CIDA was unable to provide any funding, so it fell to Jon Davison to plug into DFAIT's Global Peace and Security Fund. DFAIT would not fund military strong points, but they would fund police stations. From here on in, the strong points were renamed "police sub-stations." That said, the sub- stations were, in effect, walled mini-forts with run-up positions for armoured vehicles and plenty of barbed wire.[50]

Photo Credit: Author

Operation GARRANDAY ZMARAY [Better Future] established a lattice of police sub-stations in Zharey District. The volatile situation produced police sub-stations that were, in effect, Afghan police and Canadian soldiers-manned small forts tenuously connected by a vulnerable road network. This is Police Sub-station Kolk, the scene of repeated small-arms engagements in 2007–2008.

Operation GARRANDAY ZMARAY planners looked to the phases of the operation while all of the supporting players were assembled. The first phase was designed to establish control over Highway 1 and demonstrate to the population that corrupt policing would no longer be tolerated. For example, reports came back that Col. Akka's police working alongside Canadian troops at vehicle checkpoints routinely told citizens that the Canadians would shoot them if they did not hand over money to the police. Afghans were perplexed by how the apparently smiling Canadians were so cruel and vicious. Of course, the extortion was conducted in Pashto so the Canadians did not even know it was happening.[51] This clearly had to stop as it was undermining what little government legitimacy remained.

A strong point, not a police sub-station, would be constructed at Howz-e Madad, and manned by the Afghan National Army and the OMLT. Habibullah Jan had to be convinced to remove his checkpoints in Senjaray, and finally, Col. Akka had to be removed from his position as district chief of police. These were the preconditions if the operation were to move into the Zharey District's interior.

3 R22eR Battle Group put together a precursor operation, Operation BALYE DEWEY [Lit Candle] on 23 September. The psychology behind the operation was to make the point that Canadian and Afghan armies and police could operate in the Senjaray area, conduct a cordon and search, and establish a legitimate police checkpoint to offset Habibullah Jan's checkpoint system. In the early hours of 3 September, Maj. Abboud led B Company alongside 3rd Company from 3rd Kandak and its OMLT mentors in a dismounted night insertion. Making use of a deception plan where X Batterie fired illumination rounds offset to the northwest of the target compounds while the Afghans and OMLT moved into a village adjacent to the target area, Makuan. B Company crept in to establish the cordon and then 3rd Company abruptly shifted east into Makuan for the search. The police accompanying the Afghan army conducted the searches. BALYE DEWEY did not uncover any enemy activity but the message was sent to and received by Habibullah Jan.[52]

The first two new positions went in on 9 September. Operation KHAIR KHOWHAI [Keeping Goodwill] involved an ad hoc route clearance package consisting of a Leopard tank with rollers, and the only operational Badger engineering vehicle leading two platoons of infantry from B Squadron and a tank platoon, plus two Afghan platoons and OMLT mentors south from Highway 1 to Lakokhel. The first position was established, with minimal contact. The Sperwer TUAV and X Batterie, working together, actively sought targets, one of which was engaged with ten rounds of HE. The enemy fired at the second Lakokhel checkpoint site with RPG and 82mm mortar fire. The Leopard tanks engaged with HESH and an A-10 flew in hunting targets. At the same time, C Company sent a platoon in LAV III with two troops of tanks from Maj Trevor Gosselin's C Squadron south from Highway 1 but further west in order to resupply Ghundy Ghar. This move was completed without incident. Afghan police and their associated P-OMLT were not expected to arrive until 13 September when construction of the police sub-stations was to be completed by 53e Escadron engineers.[53]

The enemy did not like these impositions on their turf and, for several days, there were numerous "shoot and scoot" TICs in Zharey District. In one day, there were three small-arms engagements, a mortar attack, and RPG fire at various coalition and Afghan facilities. The strong point at Howz-e Madad also came under heavy fire. Most of these attacks took place north of the new police sub-stations, along their resupply routes to Highway 1. At the same time, there was a shower of rockets fired against FOB Ma'Sum Ghar.[54]

The response to this was Operation LOY THUNDER, an Afghan National Army operation. Launched at night, 3rd Company from 3rd Kandak, screened with a platoon from Weapons Company and backed up by a Canadian platoon from C Company, swept through the area between FOB Ma'Sum Ghar and Pashmul. Significantly, a Sperwer TUAV flew in to support the operation and was controlled by the OMLT at its command post

through a TUAV liaison officer. Though there was no contact, the operation demonstrated that 3rd Kandak had the potential to operate autonomously at the company level. Their brothers in 1st Company, who were occupying the Howz-e Madad strong point, beat back yet another enemy probe, killing two insurgents.[55]

The matter of Col. Akka came to a head by the end of September, though it took a meeting with the Governor to gain momentum on the problem. Khalid was told that "there is a lack of cooperation and trust between the Afghan police and the CF in Zharey. This is directly linked to Col. Akka's perceived lack of will to support our operations… and because he is evidently profiting from his position to the detriment of his forces."[56] Apparently, the Provincial Council "dealt with the problem" and Khalid confirmed Akka would be removed.[57] However, General Saqib resisted Akka's removal stating that Akka was just misunderstood, he would not be fired, and he would get a soft administrative position in Afghan National Police headquarters. Akka's removal letter blamed the Canadians for removing him, and that it was done to the protestations of the Afghan police and the Governor himself.[58] Over time, Akka cultivated a relationship with the American police mentors. Akka then used this relationship to drive a wedge between the American Police Mentoring Teams and the Canadians. This was not difficult to do given the deteriorating relationship between the American Police Mentoring Teams and Canadian forces.[59] While Akka was in the process of being fired, the Police Mentoring Teams raided an internally displaced persons camp in Zharey supported by Col. Akka and confiscated the uniforms and weapons of the legitimate Afghan police that were protecting the camp. They publicly humiliated the police in front of the camp population.[60] In hours, the police leadership in Kandahar was up in arms, with the JPCC blaming the Canadians for harassing Zharey police. It was evident to outside observers that the American Police Mentoring Team was manipulated into this action and it seriously highlighted the dangers, on all levels, of having uncoordinated, politically unaware forces operating in the Canadian battle space.[61]

Under the surface, however, lay three items of interest. First, the displaced persons camp police commander had, in the past, arrested a relative of Akka for laying IEDs. Akka's action served as payback. Second, it was evident that Akka's relationship to Ahmad Wali Karzai intimidated the Kandahar power structure into cushioning the blow, as it were, using Canada to take the blame for his removal. Again, this type of problem and these sorts of events had a cumulative effect on the Zharey District over the course of years and fueled distrust in ways that PRT-administered projects could not mitigate. Third, Col. Akka was eventually transferred to Dand District as police chief and not to an administrative post, right when insurgent problems started up in that district in early 2008. Of note, Dand was one area that had land required for the Kandahar City bypass road. There were interests that evidently wanted to have their man on the ground when the right land needed to be appropriated for the project.[62]

Operations in Panjwayi District, August–September 2007

Operation GARRANDAY ZMARAY flowed into Panjwayi District concurrently with the Zharey operations. Maj Robichaud's C Company and the PRT CIMIC teams ran up against credibility issues with the district power brokers when they moved in in August. The district chief of police, Bismillah Jan, was incensed about the Canadian response, or lack thereof, to the Checkpoint 5 and 10 attacks of 7 August. Jan was "very upset that Canadians had sent support only to evacuate injured Afghan police and not to engage in the fighting." Jan reported nine dead and three wounded, plus an unknown number of missing.[63]

The other issue was the ongoing lack of compensation over land expropriation and water diversion on the construction of Routes Brown and Dwyer near Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar. Local people saw compensation money flowing into Zharey over Route Summit and wanted the same thing for Panjwayi. The shura pressured the PRT to get the Governor to cease construction until a compensation package acceptable to all parties could be negotiated. When the shura met with the Governor, "he told them that they will not get money from him and to take their "dirty faces" away from his office immediately." The shura members told the Canadian CIMIC teams that the Governor "has broken the golden rule of respect for elders within their culture [and] want to have him removed from power and replaced."[64] Haji Agha Lalai Dastagiri supported the district elders both publicly and behind the scenes in this matter.

At issue was the lack of district leadership, as well as poor provincial-level leadership. The Khairuddin assassination left a vacuum in Zharey, so Asadullah Khalid transferred Niaz Mohammed Sarhadi over from Panjwayi and planned to shift Bismillah Khan, the chief of police, as well.[65] At this time, three Afghan police in eastern Panjwayi were kidnapped; the Taliban subsequently took them to Nakhonay and publicly executed them. The bodies were dumped in Chalghowr. When the local people called the district police, the responding unit was ambushed and had several officers wounded.[66]

In effect, the population was annoyed with the provincial government for not behaving properly socially as well as financially; the population believed that the Canadians were unable or unwilling to facilitate these matters on their behalf, and the police were annoyed at the Canadians for not assisting them when they were in dire straits.

The battle group and the NSE, meanwhile, were concerned about Route Fosters East. To disrupt enemy activity to the south of the highway and maintain freedom of movement, 3 R22eR Battle Group launched Operation SAMANDARY TOOFAN [Peace Hurricane] into the Salehan-Mohajerin area on 4 September. Three clusters of community compounds were selected, isolated by C Company and C Squadron, and then two unmentored Afghan army platoons and a platoon of Panjwayi police searched them. Supported by PRT CIMIC, key leadership engagements were held to gain information on the area. No enemy were encountered and no weapons were found.[67]

The lack of information on the enemy in Panjwayi and their connections to the insurgency in Zharey with specific reference to command and control was of some concern, so the battle group and the ASIC produced a manoeuvre-to-collect operation, SOLAH ARAME. SOLAH ARAME, as it turned out, became a running fight all day up Route Fosters West to Zangabad. C Company, C Squadron, and an engineer troop from 53e Escadron moved west down the Arghandab riverbed and breached in near Talukan. Two tanks were de-tracked and had to be recovered, and this delayed the operation three hours. At 1133 hours, there was an IED strike on a LAV III, with no casualties. 82mm rounds started to land, but the tanks were able to engage the launchers with 105mm HESH rounds. The force headed east up the highway and from 1135 hours to 1830 hours, there were 18 separate contacts over the space of 3 kilometres with small arms, RPGs and mortars. (See Figure 2-4.) There were no Canadian casualties but, in six of the contacts, the SOLAH ARAME force was able to engage and destroy the ambushing forces. The force made it back to Ma'Sum Ghar without further incident by 1930 hours.[68] The enemy leadership in Panjwayi was not sure what was going on. One leader, Haji Agha Lalik, was acquired by ISTAR resources as he moved around the Sperwan Ghar area. C Company wanted to sortie out and get him but was already overstretched and unable to do so.[69]

SOLAH ARAME provided enough information to permit Operation SADIQ SARBAAZ [Honest Soldier] to proceed on 24 September. This operation was designed to establish a police sub-station on a critical piece of terrain on Route Fosters West, eight kilometres from FOB Ma'Sum Ghar. As Fosters wound around the Ma'Sum Ghar feature, the road doglegged and then narrowed considerably next to a shrine that had a mosque set above it on a high feature. The three-kilometre gap from this junction to Zangabad Ghar was also a crossing point on the Arghandab River: the community of Sia Choy in Zharey District lay to the north. Having a coalition presence here was crucial not only to interfere with enemy movements across the river but also for keeping the route open to Brown and Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar, and then west along Route Fosters toward Zangabad, Talukan and Mushan. C Company and C Squadron, supported with an engineer troop and two platoons from Weapons Company, 3rd Kandak, moved on Objective JESTER from two axes: part of the force moved along the Arghandab riverbed, while the other moved along Fosters West. The tanks established a block on the river, while the Afghan army and the engineers cleared the police sub-station site. Maj Robichaud's vehicle, unfortunately, struck an IED, and two soldiers were wounded. Down the riverbed, a Leopard C2 became immobilized, so an Armoured Recovery Vehicle from Tango Maintenance deployed to recover it. While the mobile recovery team was doing so, they came under fire from RPGs and 82mm recoilless rifles (though mortars were reported as well). An 82mm round struck

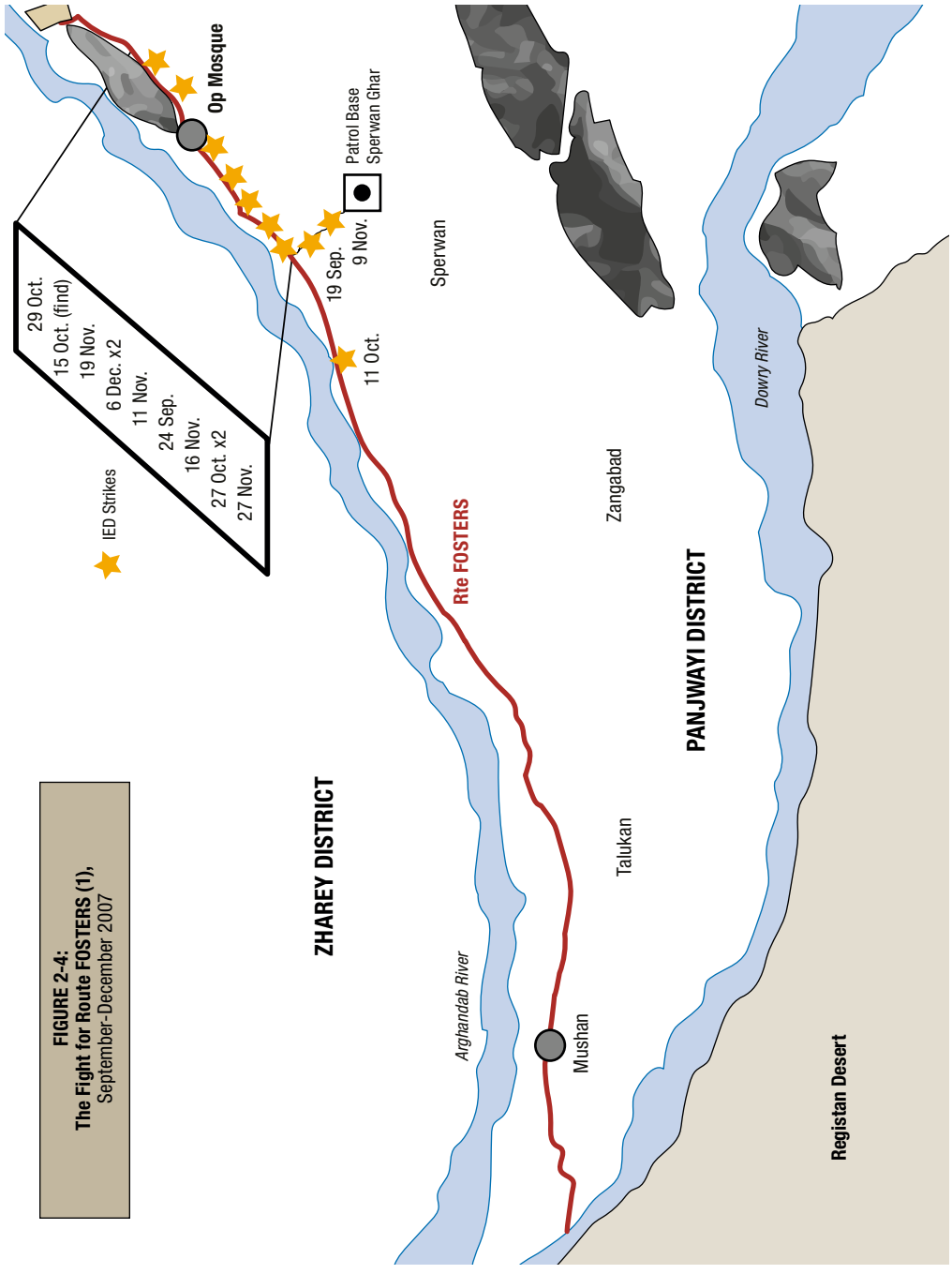


Figure 2-4: The Fight for Route Fosters (1), September-December 2007

the armoured recovery vehicle, penetrated the armour and killed Cpl Nathan Hornburg from the King's Own Calgary Regiment. RPGs hit the area, wounding a total of five Canadians. One of the Leopards identified where the fire was coming from and took out the enemy anti-tank teams with 105mm fire.[70]

Once the casualties were evacuated, work continued on what was now designated Police Sub-station (PSS) Haji and Maj Robichaud conducted a key leader engagement with the local elders and mullahs. The occupation of the area with a police sub-station provoked the insurgents, who ambushed a C Company patrol wounding two Canadians. X Batterie's M-777s fired in support to help the platoon break contact. That night, an enemy team tried to emplace IEDs on Route Fosters West but accidentally detonated their own device, wounding four of them. PSS Haji now came under ineffective but persistent mortar fire. Occupying the high ground, C Company called in X Batterie and 12 155mm rounds destroyed both enemy mortars. The P-OMLT arrived with Afghan police and took up positions: they were engaged with small-arms fire as they deployed. The police responded with their weapons, beating back an ambush at their checkpoint.[71] PSS Haji was, evidently, hot property, and would continue to be so.

Spin Boldak and Recce Squadron

Spin Boldak remained the "lost command" during the remainder of 2007 and into 2008. Geographically and psychologically separated from Kandahar City, the Laroche TF Kandahar was still mandated to maintain Operation SATYR NYX. Once again, elements of Recce Squadron were tasked with this mission. Whereas TF 1-07 defined what was going on in Spin Boldak with an eye toward assisting the United Arab Emirates task force deployed there, Recce Squadron led by Maj Pierre "Pete" Huet, was forced by changing Canadian political circumstances to take things a step further.

First, there was increased DFAIT interest in Spin Boldak, which produced increased DFAIT pressure for increased battle group involvement in Spin Boldak. This related to a variety of law enforcement programmes geared towards improving border security on both sides of the Durand Line. Second, and related to this, was the strategic need to generate taxes and thus revenue for the Government of Afghanistan using border crossing points. Third, CIDA wrestled the Highway 4 paving project away from USAID and committed to ensuring that this vital regional trade route was accessible and open. Thus, having some saliency in the security situation was crucial so these aims could be met.[72]

Photo Credit: Author

Recce Squadron in Spin Boldak conceived and implemented an important organizational development: the Joint District Coordination Centre. The Joint District Coordination Centre brought together all of the disparate security organizations in the district so they could exchange information. This idea was implemented elsewhere in the Canadian area of operation. Col. Abdul Raziq, the primary power broker in Spin Boldak, is second from the right.

Maj Huet and his troops saw that there were too many uncoordinated entities operating in Spin Boldak and that, in many cases, they worked at cross purposes. There were Col. Raziq's Afghan Border Police (Col. Hakim Jan from Kandahar was in charge of the regular Afghan National Police); a Reconnaissance Company from the Afghan National Army; the remnants of the former Afghan National Highway Police; and the National Directorate of Security. An American ETT worked with the Border Police, while DynCorp mentored the Border Police headquarters.[73] Indeed, just getting forward operating base space was problematic as the United States provincial police mentor claimed American ownership of the FOB land, which led to juvenile games over who could set up where.

Maj Huet and staff looked at the situation. They were familiar with the Joint Provincial Coordination Centre in Kandahar, and the Joint Regional Coordination Centre for southern Afghanistan. Why could a similar organization like it not work at the district level in Spin Boldak? The result was the Joint District Coordination Centre or JDCC. Huet and his team took the idea one step further. Why not establish a duty officer with a phone, bring in the PSYOPS teams to distribute leaflets, and establish a 911-like emergency phone system? At the same time, why not establish a joint QRF, a mixed team of army and police?

This is precisely what Recce Squadron did between August and October 2007. It was an effort just to get all of the Spin Boldak security entities in one room and this was accomplished through force of personality more than any other factor. Canadian PSYOPS came down and handed out cards and flyers with the emergency phone line, which immediately lit up with citizens pouring information into the system on suspicious activities.[74]

Recce Squadron also attempted to develop relationships with Pakistani border-security forces. Dubbed "Border Flag Meetings," there were great expectations but those expectations had to be managed, especially when the Pakistani commanders insulted their Afghan counterparts. Little was accomplished. That said, when a Recce Squadron Coyote patrol crossed the Durand Line due to a navigational error, the matter was resolved locally over tea rather than expanding into a major international incident.[75]

The PRT also deployed a CIMIC officer, Capt Steve Winter, to maintain situational awareness on development issues. In Spin Boldak, the usual accusations of corruption were flung back and forth between the Achakzais and the Noorzais. As it turned out, the bulk of the District Development Assembly members and even members of the district shura actually lived across the border in Pakistan, a state of affairs that completely undermined the legitimacy of the district leader and the government in the eyes of the population. Col. Raziq was seen by many to be more legitimate that the elected or appointed officials.[76]

The ongoing problems with smuggling in and around Spin Boldak bedeviled the security forces during this entire rotation. In essence, Raziq's border police deployed a long line of permanent but austere observation posts along the border, radiating east and west of Spin Boldak in the rural areas. There was the main crossing point, Friendship Gate, right in the middle of them in the built-up area of Spin Boldak. The enemy had three means of thwarting security measures: they could outflank the system and go through the mountainous Maruf District or desert wastes of the Reg Desert, or they could infiltrate in some of the thousands of trucks crossing through Friendship Gate. They could even employ a combination of these whereby the weapons took one route and the personnel another, to be married up in the districts around Kandahar City.[77]

For the most part, the best Recce Squadron could do was help the security forces make the movement of insurgent contraband and personnel as inconvenient as possible. Special operations forces tended to operate in Maruf and the Reg Desert, but did so in a relatively uncoordinated fashion with the Spin Boldak forces. Recce Squadron therefore focused its efforts on Highway 4, Spin Boldak and the flanking observation posts.

The main threat to Canadians operating in Spin Boldak was from two sources. First, Highway 4 was still not paved half a year after the project was started, even though provincial dignitaries launched the project publicly in April 2007 and funded it with Canadian money. An unpaved route was more susceptible to IEDs. Second, there were frequent

attempts to kill Col. Raziq with suicide bombers, which put everybody around him at risk. From September to November 2007, four suicide attacks were made against Raziq and he even captured a fifth bomber before he could detonate. An attack on 13 October produced severe casualties. Recce Squadron moved in, secured the site and arranged for medical evacuation. The Role 3 MMU hospital at KAF was now confronted with a mass casualty event. A team of two doctors and six medics deployed by CH-47 to the strike site to pick up 21 casualties. As the CH-47 helicopters returned and landed next to the hospital, the wounded were triaged and rolled into surgery in an almost assembly-line fashion. All of them, fortunately, were saved. As usual, it remained unclear as to whether it was the Taliban trying to kill Raziq, or tribal rivals using Taliban contacts to carry out their work at arm's length.[78]

Recce Squadron continued to add to TF Kandahar's understanding of the region with frequent patrols and a more precise mapping of the border area. Ultimately, a decision was made by commands other than TF Kandahar to emplace unattended ground sensors in selected areas. These operations were, in some cases, escorted by Recce Squadron. The "lost command" continued its operations throughout fall and winter 2007.

Ghorak Again

Maintaining the Ghorak police station district headquarters during the last half of 2007 was problematic. No one really wanted to keep forces in upper Ghorak, except the Governor. The police claimed they did not have the resources, and the Afghan army argued it could not resupply the remote facility. Naturally, both looked to TF Kandahar to solve the problem. The Afghan army's 1st Brigade was forced, given the circumstances, to keep an Afghan company in Ghorak, and TF Kandahar instructed the OMLT to maintain a team at the Ghorak District centre equipped with an RG-31, a LAV III and a joint terminal air controller.

Ghorak was another "lost command" situation. There was an Afghan infantry company of 65 men and a Canadian detachment of about a dozen soldiers with little to do. There was virtually no contact, although the odd rocket was flung at the district centre. It was not even clear whether these were Taliban fighters or smugglers who were annoyed at the government presence. Depending on the quality of the Afghan troops, mounted and dismounted patrols were conducted, and checkpoints established. Canadian influence also helped the Afghan company commanders engage in low-level CIMIC activity. In one case, the Afghan troops worked with locals to fix an irrigation project. This state of affairs continued from August to November. The Afghan commanders were annoyed at wasting an entire company to do what they thought the police should be doing, and wanted the company redeployed down to Zharey or Panjwayi Districts. Indeed, the bored troops were

getting into trouble in Ghorak and were starting to interface with the local drug trade, but the Governor insisted that they remain in desolate upper Ghorak, which they did well into early 2008.[79]

New Equipment, New Capabilities

The 2006 deployment of the refurbished 1970s-era Leopard C-2 tanks was a stopgap measure and seen to be so at Army headquarters in Ottawa until more suitable vehicles could be procured. Fortunately, with the Cold War long over, there were large stocks of armoured fighting vehicles belonging to various NATO countries stored all over Europe. Unfortunately, none could be cajoled into giving them to Canada, not even the small number required. This was particularly galling. Some of these nations received division-sized stocks of equipment in the 1950s gratis from Canada when they reconstructed their armies and air forces after the Second World War. They had been defended by Canadian forces during the Cold War and were now collectively unwilling to relinquish 20 tanks without extensive negotiations, contracting and other bureaucratic impediments. Some of these countries had no forces operating anywhere near Kandahar, let alone Zharey District.

The Army was engaged in ongoing doctrinal debates over the acquisition of the Stryker gun-over-armour system and was experimenting with mounting the ADATS missile system on a LAV chassis as an anti-tank vehicle. The Chief of Land Staff believed that neither of these systems was suited for the requirements of the Afghanistan environment, which emphasized protection and direct fire. Feelers went out to the United States, France, the United Kingdom and Germany for tanks to replace the older Leopards. There was no response from the British or the French. When the Canadian Army expressed interest in acquiring the M1-A2 Abrams, the Americans said no.[80]

Direct personal communications between LGen Leslie and Lt.-Gen. Hans-Otto Budde of the German Army opened the gates for Canadian Defence Attaché Col Tony Battista in Berlin, who played a significant role in negotiations.[81] In the end, the manufacturer Krauss-Maffei Wegmann agreed to lease 20 Leopard 2A6M tanks and a pair of Leopard 2 armoured recovery vehicles to Canada for use in Afghanistan. The A6M was a Leopard 2 specially modified as a mine-resistant vehicle. Nineteen of these vehicles were deployed to Afghanistan in 2007. With their 120mm guns, 360 degree "hunter-killer" sights, and night fighting capability and speed, the 70-tonne tanks brought precision firepower to bear as required in the districts. 120mm canister rounds were also deployed for close-quarters fighting. For a time, the tanks were armed with German MG-3 machine guns (which the troopers called "The Bonestripper" because of its high rate of fire) but these were later replaced with Canadian C-6 and C-9 weapons. The tank squadron quarters in Ma'Sum Ghar now boasted a new sign: "Panzer Parking Only: All Violators Will be Totaled."

Photo Credit: Author

The sophisticated, fast and deadly Leopard 2A6M, with its accurate 120mm gun, hunter-killer sight system and canister rounds, was specially modified to operate in an improvised explosive device-heavy environment. These vehicles proved to be crucial force multipliers in mounted operations in both Panjwayi and Zharey Districts.

Development and Reconstruction with the Provincial Reconstruction Team, August–October 2007

The PRT, led by LCol Chamberlain, continued in its reconstruction and development endeavours but with a new CIMIC organization, a beefed up DFAIT team and a more capable Specialist Engineer Team. The main Afghan development effort was, however, in trouble. The National Solidarity Programme, with the district assemblies and community councils, briefed well in PowerPoint. By November 2007, there were supposedly 529 Community Development Councils operating in Kandahar Province. CIDA claimed that there were 20 each in Spin Boldak and Khakrez Districts and that there were now development councils funded by CIDA in Kandahar City. A briefing map depicted development councils throughout Zharey District, with the notable exception of a blank circle surrounding Nahlgam.[82] The reality was, however, that the whole effort was stalled by September 2007. UN HABITAT was supposed to provide confirmatory data on the development councils but refused to go "outside the wire" because of the security situation. As a result of this and other factors, project money was being delivered to only a few of the listed communities via the district assemblies and shuras, which were, in turn, facilitated through the PRT CIMIC teams.[83]

Indeed, CIDA discovered that the insurgents had infiltrated some of the community development councils in areas where Afghan and ISAF forces did not operate or only visited sporadically.[84] That situation was dangerous for the whole Afghan and coalition effort. The insurgents were, in effect, taking international community (and Canadian) monies and working with local populations as if they were the government. This posed a direct threat to the legitimacy of the Afghan government at the community level and was yet another example of how the insurgents were able to use government resources for their own purposes.

Another example of insurgent parasitism was the health care system. The medical staff assassinations in the first half of the year effectively cowed the Kandahar medical community. The Red Cross told ISAF and the Afghan security forces that military vehicles, personnel and weapons were no longer welcome at Mirwais Hospital. Wounded Taliban insurgents and Al Qaeda terrorists, however, were welcomed at Mirwais Hospital. In effect, the hospital became a neutral zone in Kandahar City, one that was not aligned with the government nor with the government's development plan. And, in this environment, anything that was neutral benefited the insurgency and not the government. This further undermined government legitimacy with the population. An international organization that repaired insurgents to go back out and fight against the government using government resources was just too mind-bending for the average Afghan and fed a whole host of anti-ISAF conspiracy theories.[85]

Kai Eide, a Norwegian diplomat and later the UN special representative in Afghanistan, noted that by late 2007 the UN agencies did not want to be involved in the reconstruction effort in Afghanistan:

> The mandate was not only demanding: I would soon find out that it was also controversial, not least within the UN family. It required closer UN cooperation with the Afghan government and the international military forces, but a number of UN agencies saw such cooperation as a threat to the independence of the UN. It could blur the lines between civilian and military activities, make the UN staff more vulnerable, and harm its efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to areas where the Taliban was present. It could certainly have a negative impact on attempts to play a role in reconciliation, since the Taliban would see the UN as being too close to the enemy, the international military forces. These views were widely shared among the non-governmental organizations in Afghanistan.[86]

This attitude seriously attenuated reconstruction in Kandahar Province. Unable to connect with UN agencies, the PRT focused more and more on road construction planning. USAID and CIDA worked out a division of labour in this area through fall 2007 but, in this case,

CIDA representatives at the PRT were constrained from leaving Camp Nathan Smith because of their security parameters and claimed they could not gather confirmatory data. The PRT's new Specialist Engineer Team (SET) tried to use its contacts where it could, and Recce Squadron sent back data on the lack of movement on the Highway 4 paving project, but there was a lack of interdepartmental synergy on these and other issues. The prototype of the SET emerged earlier in 2007 with a lot of preliminary work undertaken by a small team, led by Maj. Tanya Concannon, a British exchange officer. On the later 2007 rotation, 1 Engineer Support Unit from Moncton provided the SET, led by Capt Barbara Honig. The expanded SET gave the PRT the ability to handle project design and management tasks. Why was this important? The PRT was increasingly involved in military infrastructure as well as reconstruction infrastructure, and that assessment work had to be conducted in a non-permissive environment. CIMIC needed support in technical areas as well, as did the P-OMLT. To some extent, the Specialist Engineer Team made up for some of CIDA's deficiencies. For example, CIDA would not fund toilet construction for the Afghan National Police sub-stations because it was security-oriented. The SET could go out and work with the Afghan police, design and build the appropriate facilities, or, if necessary, mentor and quality control a contractor using DFAIT global peace and security funding. The SET also supported the "Engineer Club." Engineers from all of the international organizations and, most importantly, Afghan engineers who survived the Taliban era, met with the Specialist Engineer Team for regular lunches, professional development, and information exchanges. This sort of informal capacity-building was not measured by higher Canadian headquarters or by Ottawa, but it had a significant effect on the community and the coalition effort as a whole.[87]

This sort of gap filling made the PRT a unique and effective organization. By mid-2007, the Italians still had not delivered in the justice sphere. DFAIT's inability or unwillingness to get deeply involved in disentangling the Afghan justice system, and instead focus on policing, led the PRT Judge Advocate General, LCdr April Inglis, to expand the PRT's involvement to make up for the shortfall. As discussed in the previous chapter, LCdr Gina Connor had identified that the police, justice and incarceration aspects of governance were interlinked and that addressing only one of these "legs" was a problematic exercise. This also had a direct impact on the Canadian detainee issue in that the Canadian Army was being criticized by the opposition for turning over detainees to Afghan police and then not keeping track of them.[88]

Though it took several months, the PRT was finally able to collect enough information on the Kandahar justice system to gain insight into the problem, information that should have been readily available from the Italians who were supposedly handling the judiciary "pillar."

The conclusions were nothing short of daunting. No matter how it was presented, there was simply no functional government-controlled justice system in operation in Kandahar Province. As a result, "There is a common belief amongst key actors (from judges to citizens) that the issue of corruption is seriously eroding the little trust that people have in the formal judicial system."[89] There was minimal infrastructure. Only 7% of the judges' positions were filled, 45% of the prosecutors reported for duty, and defence attorneys defended an estimated 12% of the cases. It took months for the Judge Advocate General to determine what legal texts were in play. And, on further examination, there were three separate sets of laws that conflicted with each other: there was the Constitution, Sharia Law and Customary Law (Pashtunwali). There was no consensus on which form of Sharia Law was the standard for the province.[90] An attempt to establish a "Legal OMLT" using Canadian Forces legal officers was opposed by both CIDA and DFAIT.[91]

The lack of basic legal knowledge had significant ramifications for the counter-insurgency effort in the districts. Uneducated religious leaders in the rural areas, left to their own devices, believed that Sharia Law and Pashtunwali were one and the same. The CIDA and DFAIT reluctance to deal with religious engagement activities meant that Canadians could only deal with part of the legal system, and not the whole. If local people went to a local mullah for a ruling, say, on a land or water use grievance issue, this completely bypassed any Afghan government legal structure that might ideally exist and made the process susceptible to Taliban competition for legitimacy. That is, a Taliban-influenced mullah could dispense justice locally and the Afghan government could do nothing to compete with him.

On the incarceration front, a lot of Canadian energy was directed at making Sarposa Prison a showpiece, especially its women's section. Sarposa seemed to be a perfect project as it was a visible structure with people working in it. The progress of the prison was easier to measure in numbers, bricks and mortar than progress in ephemeral things like words, ideas or beliefs.

The most robust aspect of PRT operations remained the CIMIC teams. Building on the previous rotations and their relationships, the CIMIC operators strengthened relationships with the district leaders and their District Development Assemblies. When the Community Development Councils progressively ran into problems in the fall and less and less funding for the District Development Assemblies was available to dole out, CIMIC representatives were able to work at the district level to prop the system up using PRT funding where possible. The PRT and CIMIC pushed the long line of contractors at Camp Nathan Smith out to the districts so they could deal, Afghan to Afghan, with the development assemblies. All the while, CIMIC maintained situational awareness, and fed information back to the PRT and then to TF Kandahar.[92]

Photo Credit: Author

Operation CAUSEWAY was a major construction project linking the economic centre of Bazaar-e Panjwayi with Route Summit and then to the main trade route, Highway 1. It took many months of negotiation between every possible governance entity before it went into operation. This is the causeway seen from a tank run-up position on Ma'Sum Ghar.

An example of this was Operation CAUSEWAY. The demand to get a bridge across the Arghandab River between Bazaar-e Panjwayi and Pashmul was finally bolstered by the GARRANDAY ZMARAY plan. CIMIC, Specialist Engineer Team and other PRT resources were employed to sort out land use issues, engineering matters, information operations and local buy-in. CAUSEWAY was a laborious process in fall 2007, especially given the complexities of the socio-political situation in Zharey and Panjwayi Districts. Though it took months, the PRT was able to mitigate at least some of the negative effects and hard feelings that came with the project. In many ways, Operation CAUSEWAY was a test case on how to use all of the PRT tools together to handle larger district-level projects in the absence of non-governmental organization and other government assistance.

Operations in Zharey and Panjwayi Districts, October 2007

The main effort in Zharey and Panjwayi Districts remained the emplacement of the police sub-stations, specifically Kolk, which was next in line. At the same time, the Joint District Coordination Centre concept was extended to both districts based on the positive results attained by Recce Squadron in Spin Boldak. With the removal of

Col. Akka and with his replacement with Bismillah Jan in early October, TF Kandahar and the battle group believed that the time for change was now. To establish the conditions, however, LCol Gauthier wanted to put the insurgency back on its heels west of Summit with Operation BEL UNIAD. B Company, with the Leopard tanks in support, inserted dismounted patrols into the Pashmul area. The tanks attracted enemy anti-tank teams and two enemy sub-commanders, all of whom were killed during their attempts to engage the Canadian vehicles. ISTAR reportage indicated BEL UNIAD had a temporary disruptive effect.[93] To keep the enemy guessing, a 48-hour long manoeuvre-to-collect operation, TEASE STREBEH, was mounted west of Gundy Ghar, with a higher-level ISTAR collection effort arrayed to support it. TEASE STREBEH defined the enemy presence in the Maywand–western Zharey area for future operations.[94]

The OMLT assisted 3rd Kandak planning Operation AWAL MOSHTEREK, which involved police, army, and civil order police. This operation into Nakhonay would have been a significant operation, not only in size but also in terms of the substantial coordination between the three Afghan organizations. For some reason, the Governor did not give his consent and the operation was shut down.[95]

The Afghan police needed serious propping up. Akka's departure meant that police officers loyal to him walked away from their checkpoints and sub-stations. PSS Haji was under small-arms fire daily and, as October continued, nearly every police sub-station in Zharey had its Canadian P-OMLT engaged either at the sites, on patrols or when SECFOR convoys were resupplying them. Three Canadian P-OMLT personnel were wounded in various bomb attacks.[96]

Throughout October, however, there was notable progress. The fact that the enemy targeted the police and their mentors was an indication that local police patrols or, at the very least, a police presence, interfered with insurgent freedom of movement and ability to influence the population. The system in place, as imperfect as it was, prevented the enemy from building up in large numbers. More sophisticated operations were also conducted. Afghan police working with a Canadian P-OMLT were supported with a Sperwer TUAV, whose crew directed the police into an ambush position to intercept possible insurgents. On the less sophisticated front, checkpoints intercepted individual insurgents, including at least one local commander.[97]

Once the Joint District Coordination Centre in Zharey was up and running, however, the game changed dramatically. Almost overnight, the amount, and eventually the quality, of information on all forms of activity in the district increased. The Afghan police, situated in the police sub-stations and patrolling while carrying their Icom receivers, had greater contact with the population and spread the intelligence collection web at a lower level. So did the Afghan army. Later on, Canadian PSYOPS teams moved in to pass word to

the population that a 911-style phone system was in place—any trouble, call the JDCC. The Joint District Coordination Centres permitted all of this information to be brought to one location where it could be assessed and acted upon. A similar and parallel Canadian process was also in place. The main issue, of course, was what to do with the information and that meant sorting out governance at the district level. In any event, these were positive developments that needed to be built on as this was the first real means that the population had to call their government for help when confronted with insurgent intimidation.[98] By the end of October, the P-OMLT noted that "We are seeing a drastic improvement on the Afghan police's performance on the different police sub-stations. It is encouraging for everyone…."[99]

A combined battle group Afghan army–Afghan police operation, RESHTEYA ADAALAT, was conducted on 10–11 October. Like previous emplacement operations, RESHTEYA ADAALAT was to deposit a functional police sub-station near Kolk. LCol Gauthier brought in B and C Companies. 3rd Kandak was only willing to provide a reduced company of infantry, which wound up being led by its mentors because of a leadership dispute within the kandak. RESHTEYA ADAALAT had two prongs thrusting south from Highway 1, both led by IED and mine clearance machinery, in this case the remote-controlled M-113 Improved Landmine Detection System (ILDS) vehicle. The first prong was a feint down Route Chilliwack, led by a dismounted infantry platoon from C Company, followed by the mine clearance and a mounted platoon in LAV III, and then an Afghan platoon plus police. The idea was to distract the enemy and draw them east away from the other prong, led by B Company and backed up with Leopard tanks, that headed down Route Victoria later on. The station was to be set up at the junction of Routes Halifax and Victoria.[100]

The movement to the line of departure on the highway went without incident, as well as the C Company insertion. C Company had little contact–five insurgents and an RPG. B Company, on the other hand, hit an IED with the remote-controlled vehicle and was engaged by 30 insurgents with anti-tank weapons. X Batterie and A-10 air support were called in to assist B Company in its movement south. There were two more IED strikes before they reached the police sub-station site. At 2000 hours, two separate insurgent attacks were made against the leaguered troops. 25mm fire from the LAV IIIs drove them off and construction started.[101]

Coincident to this was an Afghan army operation, LUMARRAY BAADWEN [First Blow]. 1st Company and Weapons Company from 3rd Kandak and its Canadian mentors, plus engineers from 53e Escadron, mounted a surprise series of cordon and search operations in and around Howz-e Madad. The searches turned up electronic components and ammo but no insurgents.[102]

During both operations, the Afghan police in the Zharey sub-stations surged into checkpoints in their areas to intercept any insurgents retreating from or reinforcing the battle. Of six people detained, three were local insurgent commanders from Sablaghay in Zharey District.[103] The insurgents responded with a flurry of harassing small-arms attacks against FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, Afghan army positions over in Panjwayi as well as indirect fire directed at Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar, plus an IED attack on Route Fosters against an NSE combat logistics patrol. The Leopard tanks took out many of the attackers and drove the rest away, while X Batterie dropped 155mm rounds on insurgent mortar positions who were in the process of bracketing the forward operating base. Approximately seven enemy were killed.[104]

The battle group launched into Operation YAZ AWAZ, a route clearance operation where the Expedient Route-Opening Capability (EROC) teams, now operational, gained experience sweeping Route Fosters. In their first sweep, an EROC team in their Husky and Buffalo vehicles discovered and exploited what they termed a "massive" pressure-plate IED near Route Brown.[105]

Reports came in that the Afghan police had abandoned PSS Haji and the scramble was on for more police once again. It was time to get the Joint District Coordination Centre up and running in Panjwayi District. Canadian commanders learned that a man named Haji Baran from the Sperwan area was now the district leader. It was up to Maj Robichaud and C Company to re-establish some semblance of order. He assessed that the police were "highly ineffective….[The American PMT] tried to conduct a vehicle checkpoint this morning and a third of their effectives did not show for work. Of the rest, most were so intoxicated on narcotics that it was dangerous for the CF and the operation was terminated." C Company immediately occupied PSS Haji and pushed out patrols in the area around Sperwan Ghar. A snap operation into Zangabad to disrupt enemy activity was in the planning stages, while C Company requested more ISTAR assets. The PRT was looking toward getting Operation CAUSEWAY underway. Was it now time to get serious about Panjwayi District?[106] The answer was, no.

The Death of Mullah Naqib and Its Effects on Arghandab District

Though BGen Laroche remained focused on redeploying the battle group to southern Shah Wali Kot and leaving security in Zharey and Panjwayi to the Afghan security forces, the death of Mullah Naqib from wounds sustained from the assassination attempt earlier in 2007 deflected the Canadian trajectory in southern Afghanistan.

Naqib's death was nothing short of earth shattering for the Kandahar power structure. It built on already developing tensions between the Alikozai leadership and the Popalzai representatives. On 6 October, General Saqib, the Kandahar provincial chief of police,

arrested his deputy, Col. Mohammad Abdul Hakim, for alleged corruption. The reality was that Saqib resented the fact that Hakim's loyalty was to Naqib first, and not to Saqib. Hakim, an Alikozai, was closely connected to Mullah Naqib. Naqib called an Alikozai shura, who then sent a letter to President Hamid Karzai, Governor Asadullah Khalid and council chairman Ahmad Wali Karzai, stating that their tribe would pull out of the government at all levels if this harassment did not stop.[107]

With Naqib's death, one leg of a three-legged stool was cut from under the governance base in Arghandab with subsequent effects on stability. This had an impact on two levels. First, the larger power game between the Naqib-led Alikozai, the Sherzai-led Barakzai and the Popalzai representatives was thrown into confusion. Second, and the more immediate problem, was how the insurgency might exploit a power vacuum in Arghandab District. Naqib's son, Haji Kalimullah Naqibi, received phone calls from Taliban leaders requesting the right to move into and operate from Arghandab. The Canadians in the JPCC, using their sources, learned that the prevailing Afghan attitude was "No son can really replace the father."[108]

The Taliban, led by Mullah Nazar, infiltrated two small communities in northern Arghandab on 20 October. Why, exactly, this took place in close proximity to the other inter-tribal problems cannot be determined at this point.[109] ISTAR reportage suggested that 150 Taliban were on the move to join him in an attack on the Arghandab District centre on the east side of the river, a facility that commanded a view of the whole district. As this was an entry point into the hills separating Arghandab from Kandahar City, the district chief of police, Col. Zmaray, worked with Kalimullah to deploy what police they had to protect the district centre and find out what the Nazar band was up to. LCol Chamberlain put the PRT QRF on alert.[110]

In order to ascertain what was happening in Arghandab District, TF Kandahar directed the PRT to engage the Arghandab power structure (Operation REACH OUT). At the same time, Recce Squadron prepared to conduct a route reconnaissance from the city to Arghandab District and then to the Dahla Dam area (Operation GAUNTLET) ostensibly to recce the future location of an FOB in lower Shah Wali Kot (Operation NORTHERN RECCE). These operations were intended to message the Afghan population as well as the insurgents.[111]

The next day, the PRT sent a CIMIC team and infantry platoon to meet with Col. Zmaray. He warned that the population was concerned and many told him they would leave the district if nothing was done about the situation. The prospect of a mass exodus from Arghandab was now very real. TF Kandahar quietly put together a contingency plan, INITZAAR ZMAREY, in case the enemy moved on Arghandab. Operation GAUNTLET detected no enemy in Arghandab as the recce passed through the district but ISTAR coverage indicated that there was an enemy build up in Shah Wali Kot. If Operation GAUNTLET

Photo Credit: Author

The assassination attempts against the Afghan leadership in Arghandab District in fall 2007 produced increased Canadian interest in this important gateway to Kandahar City. MWO Michel Pelletier, the PRT civil-military cooperation officer assigned to Arghandab, discusses the situation with local notables.

had proceeded further into that district, the enemy planned to ambush Maj Huet's Recce Squadron.[112] The manoeuvre-to-collect operation produced, the next day, a large volume of enemy communications clearly indicating that Operation GAUNTLET had, indeed, thrown off the enemy's timetable.[113]

The military dimension of the problem came out in a meeting between the PRT and Naqib's brother-in-law and second-in-command, Khan Mohammad. Khan Mohammad, who had been an anti-Soviet Mujahideen leader and a Corps commander, reminded everybody that Arghandab was the gateway to Kandahar, and he proposed deploying Afghan security forces, checkpoints and an Afghan QRF to prevent the enemy from even getting into the district, let alone near the district centre. He thought ISAF forces, with their superior night equipment, should handle night patrols in conjunction with Arghandab police. Politically, the Alikozai tribe was still united against the Taliban and he canvassed support from elders who formerly supported the Taliban. The district police chief, Col. Zmaray, was reliable and in his view "Arghandab would surely have fallen if he was not there to defend the district." Indeed, others in the power structure kept trying to remove Col. Zmaray because he was sound and Naqib had blocked those attempts.[114] Khan Mohammad believed that the Arghandab crisis was a manageable problem and nobody favoured a MEDUSA-style operation in the district.

The INITZAAR ZMAREY contingency plan was put into effect. If the insurgents were observed to be massing outside of Arghandab, TF 32 plus UAVs and air power would disrupt them before they moved out of Shah Wali Kot or Khakrez. If the enemy infiltrated the district in small groups, then the Canadian and Afghan security forces would respond. The main trigger point would be any enemy move on the district centre.[115] The Canadians at the JPCC reported on 23 October that "it is kind of like waiting for the other shoe to drop. There have been many reports of Taliban movements but to date there has been little activity of consequence."[116]

At the same time, BGen Laroche issued his planning guidance for Operation SORR ZMARAY [Cold Lion]. He wanted a whole-of-government plan to refocus Canadian efforts in Kandahar Province from Zharey and Panjwayi to Arghandab and lower Shah Wali Kot Districts. Given the situation in Arghandab, Laroche reasoned, the time was ripe. Broadly put, the guidance for SORR ZMARAY established objectives based on all three lines of operation. Security objectives included the screening and disruption of enemy movements in the northern districts; forestall insurgent influence on the Alikozai tribe; coordinate with and monitor the activities of the TF 32; and establish a Joint District Coordination Centre. In the Governance line, he wanted to "define White SA"; maintain connectivity with tribal power brokers; and "monitor the vacuum gap over the leadership in the area created by Mullah Naqib's death." As for Development, the district development assemblies and the community development councils were to be supported, and the operation was to "reinforce the Arghandab River project as a potential regional economic centre of gravity." That is, there should be a synergy of Canadian efforts in and around Dahla Dam.[117]

Ideally, Laroche wanted Operation SORR ZMARAY to "become TF Kandahar's main effort in January 2008 once Operation GARRANDAY ZMARAY becomes secondary." The guidance was formulated in ADZ terminology in that SORR ZMARAY was, in that context, an expansion of the Kandahar ADZ to the north. Thinking ahead to February 2008, Laroche wanted tactical infrastructure in place to move the 3 R22eR Battle Group to a forward operating base that would be called Frontenac and then have the incoming 2 PPCLI Battle Group conduct a relief in place in the lower Shah Wali Kot valley. By then, the Afghans would have taken control of Zharey and Panjwayi Districts.[118] The enemy, however, were not interested in complying with Canadian timelines and, arguably, neither were the Afghans.

Operation INITZAAR ZMAREY: Taking Back Arghandab District, 31 October–2 November 2007[119]

There was some debate as to the exact motives underlying the Taliban decision to move on Arghandab. The "limited" view was that a Taliban regional commander wanted to seize and remove the contents of Mullah Naqib's three weapons depots, so he mounted the operation on his own. The "operational" view was that the insurgent leadership in Quetta wanted to exploit the power vacuum in order to gain a foothold in Arghandab, which would ultimately be part of their larger plan for the interdiction and seizure of Kandahar City. It is possible that both objectives coexisted.[120]

The insurgent infiltration was preceded with a cell phone intimidation campaign directed at the district power brokers. This proved ineffective, as District Chief of Police Zmaray taunted the insurgents back using the same means. On 28 October, however, the PRT received reports that the enemy were in Chalgoa village in the north and that the population was fleeing the area. ISTAR reportage indicted that a Taliban team had also taken over Mullah Naqib's family compound. Then a small-arms fight against an Arghandab police checkpoint at Jelawur started up. All of this activity had unintended effects, as measured by Karen Foss, a foreign affairs member at the PRT. Since 2003, the cell phone network in the province had dramatically expanded and cheap cell phones were plentiful. Word spread that the Taliban were moving in strength into Arghandab and people in Kandahar started departing the city. At this point, the exact number of insurgents in the district was not known but later estimated to be between 150 and 200. The idea that that number of insurgents could panic a city of nearly a million people was almost incomprehensible to many but was taken seriously by Governor Asadullah Khalid and BGen Laroche.

The attack came at a bad time. Hakim Jan, the Afghan National Auxiliary Police (that is, the Alikozai militia for the district) was away in Kabul, along with Mullah Naqib's military deputy, Khan Mohammad. They called up the militia using their cell phones from Kabul. TF Kandahar was able to get a pair of Royal Air Force GR-7 Harriers to provide an aerial presence over the district. It is possible that these moves deterred the insurgents from immediately moving on the district centre. This bought time for INITZAAR ZMAREY to commence.

Early in the morning on 29 October, the district elders arrived at TF Kandahar and formally asked BGen Laroche to intervene. He returned with them to the district centre with a small planning staff from TF Kandahar. Laroche contacted LCol Gauthier and ordered him to begin battle procedure. Meanwhile, LCol Chamberlain deployed a LAV III platoon from the PRT to the district centre, and Maj Huet sent a Coyote troop with them. Another Coyote troop deployed to the critical bridge crossroads area where Highway 1 met Route Red Dog, the main route into Arghandab District. The Joint District Coordination Centre liaised with General Saqib, the provincial chief of police. He was able to put together

Photo Credit: DND AR2008-K031-32

Operation INITZAAR ZMAREY, conducted from 31 October to 2 November, was a major operation to retake Arghandab District after the death of Mullah Naqib. This is the view from the Arghandab District centre, and the adjacent shrine and gardens taken in 2008, facing west. In 2007, the causeway did not yet exist. Khakrez District is the mountainous area behind the district "green belt."

a 120-man force bolstered with LTC Tom Ritz's Police Mentoring Team. They also moved out to screen the district centre. A company from 2nd Kandak arrived later on to assist them. TF Kandahar also communicated with the U.S. SOTF, TF 32. They agreed to move ODAs and their Afghans to the northern edge of the district, south of Dahla Dam.

The general plan was to contain the insurgents in the district and then send a force in to clear it systematically. The main issues for LCol Gauthier's battle group were how to hold down Zharey and Panjwayi and clear Arghandab at the same time. Arghandab was complex terrain. It was a green belt like Zharey, with irregular compound complexes, irrigation ditches and fields. Arghandab also boasted swaths of orchards, which provided overhead cover from surveillance systems. The river split the district in half, with the district centre overlooking the whole valley. Fortunately, that piece of vital ground was under friendly control.

After the attacks against Ma'Sum Ghar on 11 October, the situation in Zharey was quiet. On 26 October, the insurgents mounted a coordinated attack against PSSs Lakokhel and Pulchakan, and an Afghan police patrol. Over in Panjwayi, an American police mentor

team was ambushed, with one American killed and two wounded. C Company then uncovered IEDs near PSS Haji. Exploitation by the counter-IED team uncovered a new type of IED consisting of a yellow plastic 20-litre jerry can loaded with some new type of explosive using an anti-personnel mine as a trigger.[121]

On 29 October, nine fuel tank trucks heading west on Highway 1 were ambushed. The 2nd Kandak platoon and the OMLT stationed at Howz-e Madad responded and wound up in a gunfight with 20 insurgents. The enemy withdrew south under small-arms and 155mm artillery fire.[122] These events all appeared to be unrelated to what was happening in Arghandab but the possibility existed that, given its timing, the attack on Highway 1 was designed to pin down coalition resources and keep them in Zharey. The P-OMLTs and their police counterparts seemed to be in contact with enemy forces in one way or another on a daily basis.

With these factors in mind, LCol Gauthier decided to re-deploy Maj Abboud's B Company and part of C Squadron for INITZAAR ZMAREY, while keeping Maj Robichaud's C Company in place. Lt.-Col. Sherin Shah met with LCol Gauthier in a hasty meeting at Patrol Base Wilson, while B Company formed up. 2nd Kandak and its OMLTs were going in as well. LCol Gauthier had 52e Escadron provide an engineer troop mounted in LAV III: they deployed with 2nd Kandak to provide fire support. X Batterie relocated a pair of guns to a forward position so they could cover Arghandab District. 2nd Kandak and B Company formed a "piston" that would move southwest to northeast through the district. The "cylinder" consisted of coalition and Afghan forces arrayed on the periphery of the district: C Squadron Leopards and Recce Squadron Coyotes covered the left flank, while TF 32 covered the north. The Afghan police and their mentoring teams plus the PRT infantry platoon handled the right flank on the southern side of the river near the district centre. ISTAR reportage indicated three Taliban commanders and 150-200 insurgents still present. They were trying to get other insurgent commanders to reinforce but were not making any headway with their erstwhile allies. Word also came out that the Taliban commanders were holding shuras in some of the communities. It was time to get in and remove the infection before it took hold and spread. (See Figure 2-5.)

At 0200 hours 30 October, 2nd Kandak, the OMLT and the engineers passed through the Recce Squadron Coyotes and massed on Route Red Dog. Maj. Abboud took B Company through Kandahar City, up into the hills, south past the district centre and into the Arghandab riverbed to a ford point identified by the PRT and held by the police. Operating on two axes, the idea was to have 2nd Kandak and its support clear the left, with C Squadron Leopards and Recce Squadron Coyotes moving in parallel on the bare, low hills to the west providing flank security and to guard the operation from any possible interference

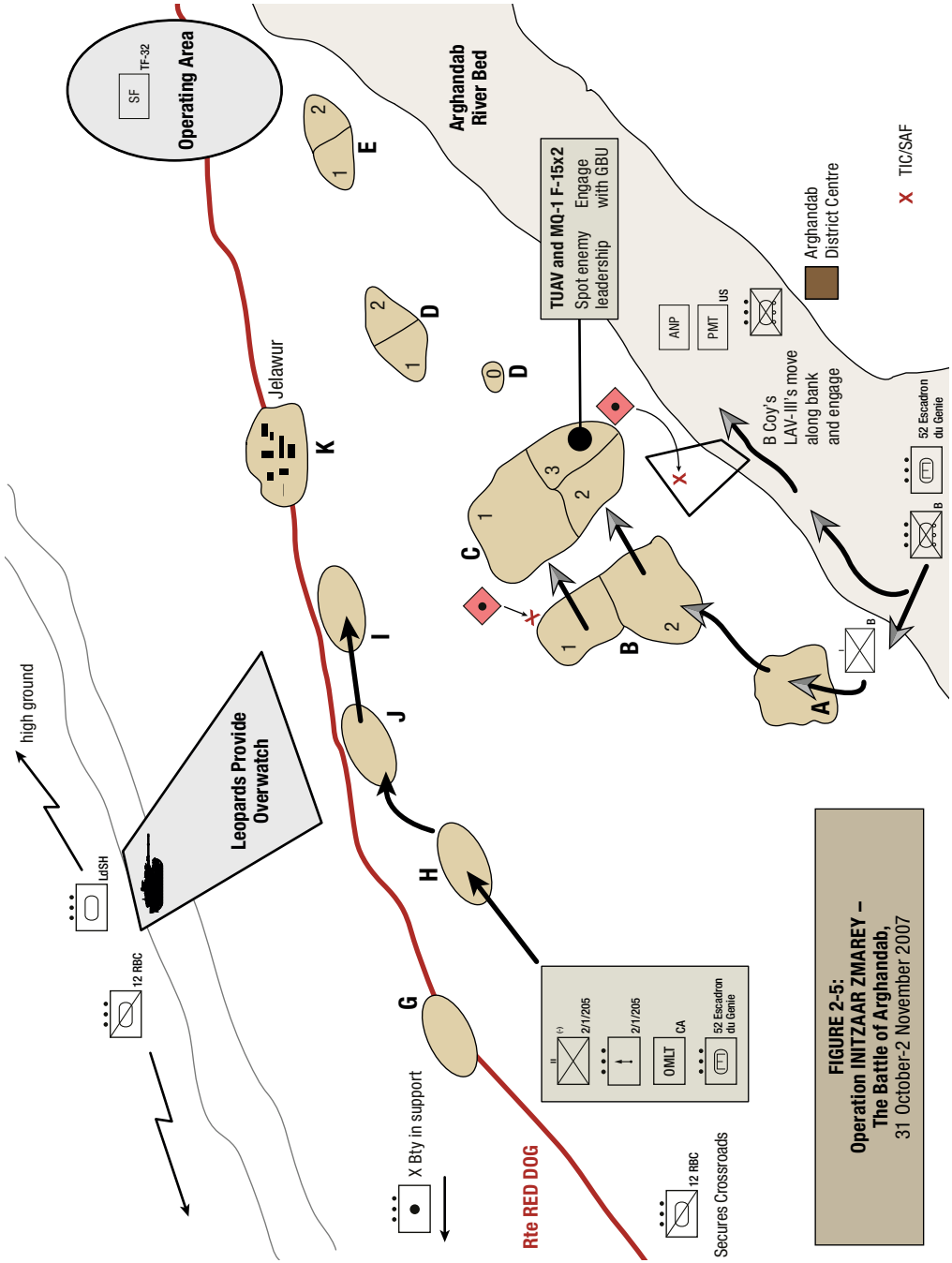


Figure 2-5: Operation INITZAAR ZMAREY – The Battle of Arghandab, 31 October-2 November 2007

from the enemy in Khakrez District. These forces stepped off at 0530 hours and started clearing compounds in Objective H. B Company, at the same time, crossed the river and dismounted. The "Zulu" LAV IIIs moved along the riverbank, covering the infantry platoons as they moved into the compounds at Objective A and cleared them. B Company immediately encountered civilians fleeing from the Taliban who were located in the compounds in Objective C: one Arghandabi even explained to B Company exactly where the enemy were. Once Objective A was cleared, around 1100 hours, B Company moved on to Objective B, where they surprised a Taliban insurgent in an observation post. A firefight erupted as B Company shook out into Objectives B1 and B2 and engaged the enemy in Objective C with machine gun fire. The Taliban responded with PKM machine guns and RPGs. The LAV IIIs in the riverbed were able to manoeuvre and bring 25mm fire down onto C2 and C3, killing a section of enemy that was trying to flank the Canadian positions in B2. This firefight lasted two hours. Eventually, M-777 fire rained 155mm rounds down on the enemy positions. Another enemy section tried to flank B1 but was caught in the open and killed to a man

The fact that the enemy were staying in place in Objective C and fighting was intriguing. As a result, the battle staff at the Provincial Operations Centre deployed a Sperwer TUAV over Objective C to see what was going on. Observer controllers spotted what looked like an enemy group, with armed fighters clustered around a leader who was giving orders. Two U.S. Air Force F-15 Eagles were orbiting the district, awaiting targets. The Canadian team at the battle group Tactical Operations Centre vectored one of these planes onto the target. A 500-pound GBU bomb hit the target dead centre killing 15 insurgents including the enemy commander.

B Company continued its fight, while the Afghans moved up to Objective J, where they encountered a high volume of enemy fire. One of the Afghan platoon leaders was killed, which stalled the advance and bogged it down in a firefight. 2nd Kandak brought up its mortars and engaged in a duel with Taliban RPG teams. A Taliban anti-tank team was spotted by a Canadian artillery officer and was taken out by 155mm fire.

By late afternoon, LCol Gauthier was concerned that a combination of the enemy's tactical proficiency, coupled with the gap between his two main axes, might lead to problems, so he ordered a halt. Lt.-Col. Sherin Shah also wanted to bring in his other two infantry companies. Water was in short supply and there were several Canadians from B Company with twisted knees and damaged ankles who needed assistance.

Photo Credit: DND IS2007-0587

Photo Credit: DND IS2007-0588

Canadian troops from 3 R22eR Battle Group engage the enemy during Operation INITZAAR ZMAREY in Arghandab District in early November 2007.

Photo Credit: DND AR2007-Z049-02

In addition to the Canadian battle group, Operation INITZAAR ZMAREY involved the Canadian OMLT and elements of 2nd Kandak, led by Lt.-Col. Sherin Shah. The Afghans lacked armoured vehicles and relied on Ford Ranger trucks.

ISTAR coverage established that the enemy leadership was divided and pleading for reinforcement from Zharey and even Helmand Province. The Taliban force had at least 50 dead, and more wounded. The enemy leaders then called back to Pakistan for help but none was forthcoming.

On the morning of 31 October, Maj. Abboud moved all of his forces into Objective C1 to force the enemy to withdraw southeast into the LAV III platoon's 25mm cannons. 2nd Kandak and the OMLT quickly occupied Objective J. There was no resistance. The Sperwer operators saw two groups of Taliban exfiltrating north to Jelawur and then "bombshelling," that is, dispersing individually, after that. Another Taliban group pulling north from Objective D was engaged with 155mm fire from X Batterie, killing seven.

The Afghans and the tanks moved onto Objective I. AH-64 Apaches spotted another enemy group but because of the built-up area in Objective I, it was difficult to engage them. Once in the open south of Jelawur, however, the attack helicopters made short work of this force.

B Company methodically cleared Objective C. This took all day but produced no contact. However, they did discover an IED belt between C and the river where there was a cut in the bank. 52e Escadron cleared this out. After another night, the coalition and Afghan forces pushed out on 1 November, but by this time the enemy was gone.

ISTAR reportage noted that the enemy survivors set a rendezvous point in Jelawur, and then evacuated to Chalgoa to the north after burying their weapons. As the Afghan police flowed into Arghandab District behind the coalition forces, they captured a Pakistani jihadist equipped with a suicide vest. After discussions with locals, the Afghan police also learned that the Taliban leader killed in the air strike was a Pakistani named Commander Ahmadullah. His body had been exfiltrated by the retreating Taliban, taken to Chaman and buried. The Taliban fighters even told Arghandabis that they were shocked by how quickly the Canadians reacted and by how many fighters they lost in such a short time. They thought they would have time to reinforce their position and get help from elsewhere.[123]

The battle group and the Afghans from 2nd Kandak were treated to what amounted to a victory parade as they redeployed through Kandahar City. There is little doubt that Operation INITZAAR ZMAREY was a victory not only for Canadians but for the Afghans as well. Arghandab was not turned into another Zharey District and there was minimal collateral damage, if any. The psychological threat to the city and its inhabitants was withdrawn and it was clear that the bulk of the population in the district still supported the government and coalition. There was some payback, however, as a Taliban IED team infiltrated the district and disabled one of C Squadron's Leopard 2s on 4 November as the battle group prepared to shepherd an Operation GAUNTLET resupply convoy through Arghandab District and up the Tarinkot Road.

Consolidating After Arghandab: Problems with the Police

Arghandab was cleared. Now it had to be held. There was broad agreement between the Canadians and Afghans brokered through the JPCC with General Saqib by which Afghan police would come in behind the Afghan army and Canadian army to secure the cleared areas and restore governance. There was no real plan, however, so the Afghan police responded in an ad hoc fashion. RCMP officers from the PRT confirmed that the pre-op checkpoints were manned and still in place and the PRT was prepared to release stores for more of them, as required.[124] Saqib, however, reminded everyone that the security of Arghandab was reliant upon the security situation in Shah Wali Kot, where he wanted more police and resources. In his view, it was "important for the coalition to maintain a strong presence in Arghandab or we would be back in the same situation again."[125] There were, of course, the usual communications and manning issues. A company from 2nd Kandak allocated to assist with the holding operations moved into the district around 3 November and occupied checkpoints on the Arghandab–Shah Wali Kot boundary. In an unexpected move, they coordinated at the local level with the Arghandab police, who in turn established a series of traffic checkpoints on the main highway throughout Arghandab.[126]

Two weeks later, reports flowed in that the Afghan army was abandoning its positions in Arghandab, which caused some angst at TF Kandahar and the JPCC. The reality was that this infantry company was withdrawn because of fighting in Zharey on Highway 1 (see below) and its removal was not well coordinated with the police, who were annoyed as they scrambled to fill the void. The police leadership in Arghandab called up 50 officers from Hakim Jan's Afghan National Auxiliary Police, the semi-approved Arghandab pseudo-militia. Personnel from the rogue Standby Police Unit 005, apparently under the control of Governor Asadullah Khalid, were also brought in.[127] A Canadian patrol from Recce Squadron moved to the area to provide presence and support but hit a remote-controlled IED, disabling a Coyote. There were no casualties.[128]

It took some time for the Canadians to grasp what was going on but when violence erupted within the police forces in Kandahar City on 20 November, ISTAR assets determined that the nature of these inter-Afghan problems were somehow related to Arghandab. Afghan National Police headquarters in Kandahar was shot at, then three police checkpoints came under sustained fire. The staff of the JPCC "stood to" as small arms fire was exchanged within 300 metres from their facility. Nobody was talking to the Canadian representatives but the PRT and the coordination centre heard that Naqib's son, Kalimullah, was in Kabul for an emergency meeting with President Karzai. This meeting, apparently, was related to "tribal" issues.[129]

Photo Credit: Author

Initiated under the rubric of Operation PORTCULLIS, most of the police sub-stations in Kandahar City were up and operating by summer and fall 2007. The rudimentary nature of the average police sub-station is evident here.

Photo Credit: DND ISX2009-0039

There was a heavier emphasis on supporting the Afghan National Police in late 2007. Task Force Kandahar reorganized its Military Police personnel into Policing Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (P-OMLT). Rather than "beat cop" policing, the Afghans were first taught basic combat survival skills like shooting.

Those issues connected to a slate of problems that emerged in early October. First, the anointing of Kalimullah as the Alikozai tribal leader without a formal Alikozai shura caused a split within the tribe, although on the surface there appeared to be a consensus that the Alikozais agreed to the move.[130] Second, with Naqib dead, no one was around to protect Col. Hakim, the deputy chief of police, from General Saqib and the Governor. Col. Hakim was fired on 20 November, which probably triggered the intramural police attacks. Alikozai auxiliary police, led by Hakim Jan, most likely conducted these. According to observers, the violent elements "used good fire discipline" unlike the insurgents or the Afghan police.[131] The Governor tried to convince the Canadians that it was all Hakim Jan's doing, that he was in league with the Taliban, who allegedly contacted him prior to the Arghandab operation. Hakim Jan may have been a mystic and was weird by Afghan standards, but there was really little question about his negative views vis-à-vis the Taliban, or his views of Asadullah Khalid for that matter.[132]

What did all of this mean for the Canadians and TF Kandahar? The Alikozai in Arghandab were increasingly disaffected with the Popalzai power brokers and their representatives in Kandahar Province. The main Alikozai leader was dead and their primary representative to the security apparatus was removed. No matter how many police or army personnel were deployed into Arghandab to hold it, a serious surge of discontent was building in the district, which was directly attributable to the vagaries of Kandahari power politics. As for the provincially-controlled police, that already fragile institution was now threatened from within by the division generated by General Saqib's clumsy attempts to remove somebody else's tribal rival. Word spread and police at Patrol Base Wilson who were from the Alikozai tribe deserted, leaving a vacuum in the post-Col. Akka Zharey District. Somebody had it in for the Alikozai in addition to the Taliban and those entities were progressively undermining the coalition effort in Kandahar.

Canadian views tended to be shaped by the Governor. Asadullah Khalid presented a negative case for the three top Alikozai contenders in favour of the young and impressionable (and possibly malleable) Kalimullah. Hakim Jan, Khalid maintained, was Taliban connected. Khan Mohammad, Naqib's security deputy, was "not respected" and had a "poor reputation." As for Haji Agha Lalai Dastegiri, he was "not trustworthy" and "came from the wrong branch of the tribe."[133] None of this was necessarily accurate, but without the appropriate framework to place it in, the Canadians at TF Kandahar had no means to counter the message with other data and the ASIC was not structured to collect it. The PRT, and to some extent the JPCC, were key mechanisms in this regard, but more focused attention was needed to protect Canadian interests.[134]

The larger questions were these: how did this seriously deteriorating situation escape observation by those responsible for the governance portfolio in Kandahar, and second, how did it escape the observation of those responsible for the governance portfolio in Kabul? Given the importance of Arghandab District to the effort in Kandahar, the combined resources of both should have been applied to identify what was happening and assist with solidifying the situation as soon as possible. They were not, and the path to further tragedy in Arghandab was set. Whatever was done, it was not enough. Clearly, there was some hold, but no build.

The convergence of the Arghandab situation with the planned Operation SORR ZMARAY occurred in November. The Canadians held a district shura with the Arghandab and Shah Wali Kot elders on 9 November to solicit their views prior to a Canadian whole-of-government coordination meeting on the future direction of the mission. What fell out of these meetings was that the Arghandab population did not want coalition forces tactical infrastructure in the district, and they did not want "outsider" Afghan police

sub-stations. But if they had their own militia and police, they would welcome Canadian CIVPOL and some mentoring. The Shah Wali Kot leadership, however, wanted a coalition and police presence with infrastructure. As a result, "All civilian and military members of the PRT agree with the Afghan district leaders that coalition force operations and traffic must be kept to a minimum in Arghandab."[135] A GARRANDAY ZMARAY-like plan, they determined, was not feasible for Arghandab and that it was better to fight the Taliban in Shah Wali Kot than in Arghandab given the differing population densities and terrain.[136]

Reconnaissance conducted in November identified the location of a future forward operating base, dubbed "Frontenac," near the Dahla Dam. The timeline saw work starting on its construction by 15 December.[137] The TF Kandahar planners cautioned, however, that any movement north was conditional on the situation in Zharey and Panjwayi. Indeed, USAID was about to suspend funding in those districts because of the security situation.[138]

The Situation on Highway 1, November 2007

Keeping Highway 1 open continued to be a priority for Regional Command (South) and TF Kandahar. The combination of P-OMLT and police activities coupled with the new Joint District Coordination Centre had an effect, especially in the Kolk area where there was a steady flow of arrests. CIMIC worked with the P-OMLT to distribute school supplies during patrols. A district-level QRF was also established and consisted of Afghan police, Canadian P-OMLT and U.S. Police Mentoring Teams, led by the Zharey chief of police. Information came into the Joint District Coordination Centre that there was an ambush in progress in Asheque involving a Canadian platoon. An RG-31 was damaged, but the ambush team, including the 82mm recoilless rifle team, was taken out.[139]

The enemy's response to coalition activities both in Zharey and in Arghandab was to apply pressure to the Howz-e Madad strong point and the highway. The strong point itself came under daily contact in late October and well into November. The Afghan company and the Canadian OMLT deployed on numerous occasions in response to apparent enemy activity only to find themselves lured into killing zones and ambushed by a manoeuvring insurgent element. This was new. When the Canadians and Afghans figured out what the game was, they turned the tables and brought X Batterie to bear on the likely routes and locations of the enemy manoeuvre elements, destroying them with 155mm fire. Now it was the Canadians and Afghans doing the luring. During one of the actions, a local Taliban commander, Nazar Gul, was critically wounded and evacuated to Pakistan. The insurgent leadership, alarmed at the backlash, brought in Taliban commanders Sadiq Agha and Haji Lala into the Sangsar region to up the ante, while the district commander, Jabar Agha, retreated to Quetta for orders.[140]

While the Minister of National Defence was visiting, BGen Guy Laroche's tactical headquarters was ambushed east of Patrol Base Wilson with a volley of RPGs and small arms fire. The IED that was supposed to trigger the ambush missed and hit a jingle truck but an RPG round found a LAV III, disabling it. The convoy pushed to Patrol Base Wilson. Fortunately, BGen Laroche and the Minister were not in the convoy at the time as he was at the patrol base awaiting the 99 TAC vehicle. It was unclear if this complex ambush had foreknowledge of the Minister of National Defence visit but it was too close for comfort.[141] Kolk continued to be a thorn in the enemy's side so they decided to try and block the access routes with IEDs. The EROC clearance patrol was brought in with its specialist Husky and Buffalo vehicles to clear Route Victoria. It took two hours to move nearly 2 kilometres because of the high IED density. As the engineers leaguered, the insurgents engaged them. The engineers fought back with their LAV IIIs, killing five enemy. Dismounted patrols cleared the area.[142] Over at PSS Lakokhel, the P-OMLT, with its 84mm Carl Gustav launcher, became proficient against insurgents attempting to interfere with police activities.[143]

On 14 November, the insurgents mounted a complex ambush in three separate locations against a Compass Logistics convoy on Highway 1. Three groups of five insurgents hit this convoy, producing six dead security personnel and a tanker truck in flames. 1st Company from 1st Kandak were able to engage two of the ambush positions in enfilade from the Howz-e Madad strong point, while the Canadian mentors called in artillery support consisting of Afghan 82mm mortars and Canadian M-777 guns. The ambushing forces died in place.[144]

LCol Gauthier decided to launch Operation TASHWISH MEKAWA on 16 November. TASHWISH MEKAWA's specific objective was, like previous operations, to clear, build and man a police sub-station west of Sangsar at the junction of Routes Ottawa and Banff. The overall objective, as we will recall, was to push the insurgent ambush teams south and away from Highway 1, and isolate Nahlgam. This operation was a Canadian–Afghan endeavour. The OMLT in Howz-e Madad was the feint: they stepped off first and moved south to establish a vehicle checkpoint on Route Langley. At the same time, Maj. Abboud deployed two of his platoons by vehicle to PSS Lakokhel, where they were joined by part of an Afghan company from 1st Kandak. Recce Platoon and snipers joined them. Moving in dismounted at night, B Company approached Objective RAFTMAN from the west and south. Sperwer TUAVs kept an eye east of the objectives, while X Batterie's M-777s prepared to take out enemy forces that moved in to reinforce or attack.[145]

As B Company and the Afghan troops moved east, they apprehended a pair of insurgents. In the fighting that followed, B Company overran the objective area, while the TUAV and artillery combination took out insurgent reinforcements and then retreating insurgents as they headed east. An F-15 and a MQ-1 with Hellfire joined in the fight. Initial estimates were that 15 enemy were killed on 17 November. However, battle damage assessments on

the ground, information collected by the police in the surrounding police sub- stations and local information called in to the Joint District Coordination Centre (and reported back to TF Kandahar by the P-OMLT teams) indicated that around 30 enemy were killed in TASHWISH MEKAWA, while a Taliban commander was seriously wounded and eight other insurgents captured. Interestingly, the police intercepted low-level chatter at PSS Haji while the operation was in progress and learned that the enemy "have engaged the services of 'engineer' to make a 'new kind' of IED that would be used 'soon.'"[146]

TASHWISH MEKAWA Phase IV had the M-113 ILDS mine clearance unmanned ground vehicle and a troop of C Squadron's Leopards escort an Afghan company from 2nd Kandak and engineers from 53e Escadron down Route Banff to the objective area, and construct a police sub-station. This was completed around 24 November. Multiple contacts occurred with enemy forces as they sought to define how the new police sub-station interfered with their activities: there were three TICs with B Company in one day (20 November). One of the first patrols from this location uncovered a significant weapons cache, the destruction of which greatly agitated the local insurgents.[147]

The ongoing ambushes on Highway 1 led to Operation RING ROAD SURGE late in November. The tanks supported the Afghan army and OMLT in a series of patrols and sweeps. Ultimately, however, Canadian analysis concluded that "The occurrence of contacts in the past several days indicates that the police sub-station is well positioned and is disrupting insurgent activities in the area; they are engaging the police sub-station rather than the convoys on [Highway 1] which is preferable."[148]

Supporting TF Kandahar Roto 4

Roto 4's NSE was commanded by LCol Nick Eldaoud: "I was a lucky guy. I inherited Chuck Mathé's structure. He had a hard time with all of the changes to the TO and Es, so I had enough resources to work with." This proved fortuitous. There had been more and more centralization of the combat service support in 2006–2007 but now, with the Laroche headquarters shift to decentralized tactical infrastructure, the NSE had to, ironically, figure out how to decentralize to meet the requirements of supporting the battle group, OMLT, P-OMLT, and PRT.[149] For the most part, the distributed logistics system in the forward operating bases in Panjwayi and Zharey was retained.

One issue LCol Eldaoud identified was an "unhealthy psychological separation" between the Replenishment Company and Force Protection Company: there was "the CLP" and "force protection." Combat logistics patrols tended to be ad hoc and he believed that melding Force Protection and truckers/suppliers was an important step toward team building. He spearheaded a move where Canadian force protection soldiers were removed from handling gate guard duties for the airfield. With the increased numbers of Bulgarian

and Hungarian troops at KAF eager to do this job, it was a relatively easy shift. In the end, "force protection" and "the CLP" became just "the CLP." They were a combat team, not necessarily in a doctrinal sense but in a psychological one. Eldaoud continued with the policy of ensuring that everybody in the NSE served as co-drivers on CLPs, including cooks. There was push-back in some quarters, but in the end, this increased the operational tempo of the NSE by reducing driver fatigue. Eldaoud and his RSM, like their Military Police counterparts, had to apply leadership to overcome attitudinal inertia associated with Canadian garrison life with some personnel.[150]

This NSE also built on the idea that every soldier was an intelligence collector. The combat logistics patrols travelled significant distances and repeatedly through vital points. Every vehicle was provided with digital cameras, while an NSE technician tried to figure out how to mount one on an RG-31 remote weapons system turret. The combat logistics patrols were able to add to the "brown SA" database on road conditions, likely IED positions, ambush sites, and so on. At the NSE, the intelligence cell grew to process and disseminate this information, which relieved the ASIC of this specialized task.[151]

LCol Eldaoud and his men were seriously concerned with the vulnerability of the NSE vehicle fleet, especially in the wake of the large IED attacks during their tour. The Heavy Logistics Vehicle-Wheeled (HLVW) trucks with expedient up-armouring were still in use at this time. On one of the first combat logistics patrols of the tour, a HLVW column was hit with an IED-initiated ambush. The convoy pushed through the "X" and reconstituted. Bullets were found to have penetrated the cab's roof, thus bypassing the armour. Eldaoud called Ottawa and said that this was it: no more use of the HLVW in Afghanistan. The 15-tonne Western Star trucks had integral armour, so these took over but there were not as many of them as the others, which reduced the resupply tempo down for a time. The lack of an armoured fuel truck led to the expedient method of carrying the vehicle on the back of a low-bed trailer with the fuel pod as far away from the cab of the rig as possible.[152]

The result of this situation was the accelerated acquisition of armoured heavy support vehicle systems, the Mercedes-Benz Actros logistics truck, but they would not be available until the next rotation.[153] As for other vehicles, the LUVWs that had thus far served Canadian forces in Afghanistan since 2004, were now grounded. Their frames were cracking under the strain of the add-on armour and continual use.[154]

The NSE re-examined its tactics and procedures. Existing doctrine was to run the combat logistics patrols at night: the roads were clear, and darkness served as cover. Why not move during the day instead? Intelligence indicated that the enemy were increasingly concerned about the negative public relations effect of killing civilians as collateral damage in attacks on Canadian patrols: the Canadian information operations campaign highlighted

the Taliban's' callousness in this regard as far back as 2006. The NSE exploited this situation after debating the ethics of it. There was concern that the NSE might be accused of using the population as shields against Taliban IED attacks in Kandahar City, but the reality was that the choice to attack a Canadian convoy was the insurgent's and the onus was on them. No more ambushes and attacks took place during the day along Highway 4, between KAF and the city itself.[155]

Operations in Panjwayi District, November 2007

The situation in Panjwayi District was dominated by problems surrounding PSS Haji and Route Fosters. A platoon from Maj Robichaud's C Company was supposed to reinforce the Howz-e Madad strong point in preparation for Operation TASHWISH MEKAWA and then assist with security during the construction phase. Unfortunately, a LAV III, the last in a six-vehicle convoy, struck an IED on Route Fosters southwest of Ma'Sum Ghar, killing Cpl Raymond Beauchamp from 5 Field Ambulance and Pte Michel Levesque from 3 R22eR. An Afghan interpreter was also killed and everybody else in the vehicle shocked or wounded. Measures by the driver to extricate dead and wounded personnel had to stop as the flames reached the ammunition and the vehicle started to cook off.[156] The C Company commander reported that "Fosters is still an IED lane."[157]

A combination of C Company and P-OMLT held PSS Haji since its construction in October, awaiting Afghan police to arrive and relieve them. There were two reasons why this relief did not take place. First, police in outlying sub-stations were not getting paid. When the district chief of police held a pay parade, it was in Ma'Sum Ghar. Consequently, the police threatened to abandon the police sub-stations along Route Fosters. When the Canadians tried to get the Afghan army to man PSS Haji, they ran into even larger problems. The kandak commanders were concerned that their poor logistics system would not be able to handle the extended line of strong points and positions along Route Fosters to Mushan. And, given the heightened IED threat on Fosters, that appeared reasonable. Moving 1st Company and the OMLT from 3rd Kandak to Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar was delayed by IEDs.[158] As of 23 November, the P-OMLT reported that "there are still no Afghan police in Haji, we are still awaiting developments on this issue but have limited influence over the Panjwayi [chief of police]. The P-OMLT [Commander] has concerns about the loss of freedom of movement on Route Fosters when the battle group assets depart from PSS HAJI."[159]

C Company led Operation COUNTER IED in an effort to "neutralize the IED threat along Route Fosters" on 25 November. The EROC clearance vehicles passed down the road from Ma'Sum Ghar, to PSS Haji and points west. A number of temporary observation posts

were established and a night ambush position put in. There was no activity until 27 November, when a LAV III from C Company hit an IED north of Zangabad Ghar wounding three Canadians. "From now on, any movement between police sub-station Haji and Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar will be done using the EROC suite or a [Route Clearance Package]," Maj Robichaud declared. Operation COUNTER IED wound down the next day.[160]

The enemy clearly realized something was amiss and upped the pressure on PSS Haji. The position was subjected to a deadly mortar attack on 22 November, wounding six Canadians and an Afghan interpreter. C Company scraped together five personnel and sent them in to replace the wounded. Two days later, however, PSS Haji was hit with a coordinated ground attack from three positions. The Canadian defenders of a reduced C Company platoon and a pair of P-OMLT mentors drove off the assault and killed eight insurgents.[161] Forty-eight hours later, the process repeated itself with another complex enemy attack that was beat back by C Company and the P-OMLT. A Sperwer TUAV followed the retreating enemy, who were then engaged with artillery and air support. There were indications that "the local Taliban commander was very upset with the result of the attack and that he was planning for another one….The fact that the Taliban is willing to sacrifice so many men in order to attack PSS Haji is a source of interest."[162]

Eventually, slight progress was made on getting more Afghan security forces for the area, but it was an arduous affair. 1st Company from 3rd Kandak was going to deploy a 20- man element at the junction of Fosters and Brown, with 40 more at Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar. A 20-man Afghan foot patrol would be made from Sperwan Ghar to PSS Haji every two days. If Canadian engineers built the facilities, 20 more Afghan National Army troops were to man two positions on Fosters on a permanent basis.[163]

Contact with the Afghans led to more insight into the policing problems that were affecting the area. First, there was the Alikozai power feud that served as a backdrop to the whole situation. Second, Bismillah Jan, the chief of police over in Zharey, was not getting paid and "General Saqib does not support him and does not care much about his fate."[164] Third, there were problems between Panjawayi District leader Haji Baran and the Panjwayi chief of police: Baran wanted unqualified friends of his in Bazaar-e Panjwayi taken on as "police" but have their salaries go to him. When an American police mentor intervened to support the police chief, Baran "was upset and one of his men told the [chief] that he would come at night and kill him and any Afghan police that tried to stop him. [Baran] advised the U.S. PMT officer that it would be dangerous for him as well."[165]

Taliban mortars, meanwhile, continued to rain down on PSS Haji with increased accuracy. This led the defenders to believe a trained mortar fire controller had moved into the area.[166] The fight continued.

Development, Reconstruction and Security, November 2007–January 2008

Once the PRT redeployed its resources from the Arghandab operation, it shifted attention to Operation CAUSEWAY. The project encountered several obstacles: district elders in Zharey and Panjwayi viewed the planned deployment of some 80 concrete segments into the river to form a causeway with some alarm. Concerns about water diversion needed to be allayed. Haji Baran and Abdul Khaliq were agitating against the project probably because both were competing for development money. When Khaliq was engaged, he pushed for an alternate plan involving retaining walls and stated that "this situation could degrade into a violent rift if ISAF was not careful with the citizens' concerns." PRT analysis determined that Khaliq wanted contracts to build the retaining walls the locals supposedly needed.[167] CIMIC operators reported that "Op CAUSEWAY which was meant to have a desired effect aimed at enhancing governance and development could turn into a counter-IO campaign on the part of the Taliban…if not properly addressed." The people of Pashmul had no community development council (in part because UN HABITAT would not go there out of security concerns) and were forced to deal with Panjwayi elders and organizations. This state generated a competitive and escalatory situation.[168]

Concerted Canadian resources were brought to bear to engage the Afghan authorities but slow progress was made throughout November and December. The Governor's lack of attention to this pressing matter compounded the problem, which, in turn, generated ill will and grievances. As the CIMIC team noted, "They have little or no faith in the Governor of Kandahar to solve the problem and turn to ISAF for help." To make matters worse, UN HABITAT upbraided the PRT for interfering in an area that they thought was their purview.[169] This concerted effort paid off, however, and the causeway was opened to great public fanfare on 8 January 2008 and, notably, security was 100% provided by the Afghan army and police. Finally, after a multi-year effort, there was now a trade link between Panjwayi District and Highway 1 that did not require a diversionary trip to Kandahar City.

The PRT was drawn into another delicate situation in Panjwayi at this time. A large internally displaced persons camp of 9 000 Kutchies located east of Bazaar-e Panjwayi was told by Haji Baran and the chief of police to depart the area as winter approached. The CIMIC detachment learned about this and reported that there was a humanitarian crisis in the offing. A CIDA representative at the PRT disbelieved the reports but did not investigate further. The CIMIC team went to the camp and reported that, in addition to having to evacuate the area, there were serious water and sanitation issues. This was confirmed by a UN representative and by the USAID representative at the PRT during another visit. Together, CIMIC and USAID confronted Haji Baran, who claimed that there was no problem. CIDA representatives contacted Baran through an intermediary (as CIDA personnel were not allowed to leave Camp Nathan Smith by CIDA Ottawa for

security reasons) who convinced them that everything was okay. Eventually CIDA and DFAIT gave permission for their representatives to accompany CIMIC to the camp, while the CIMIC team arranged for water-well drilling. In the interim, a number of Kutchie children died of exposure, several elders were kidnapped by unknown elements, while the drilling crews were harassed and forced to pay a "tax" to a Taliban representative from Khenjakak in southeastern Panjwayi.[170]

A Kutchie representative approached the PRT and asked for blankets and tents. He was directed to the UNAMA representative in Kandahar. UNAMA said no; they would not do anything unless asked by the Government of Kandahar. Finally, CIDA representatives finally acknowledged that there was a problem, pressured the Governor to intervene and ask the UN to help the IDP camp people, and put together a plan to go to the World Food Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) if the Governor gave his assent. Neither the World Food Programme nor UNICEF would move without a request from the Governor either. LCol Chamberlain, now aware of what was happening, interceded with Asadullah Khalid and asked him if he was empowered to make a decision or not and, if so, to use the Provincial Development Committee as the mechanism to respond to the crisis. CIDA and DFAIT personnel worked on the Deputy Governor at the same time.[171] Meanwhile, more Kutchies succumbed to the elements. Men claiming to be Taliban then showed up at night and harassed the camp people. The insurgents confiscated what little material CIMIC was able to drop off. Finally, the World Food Programme sent a person to the camp who reported to CIDA that the Kutchies were in "dire straits." When the World Food Programme arrived with aid, the Kutchie elders refused to take it out of fear of the intimidators. Nearly two weeks after the drama began, LCol Chamberlain and the PRT were able to get all of the players around a single table to deal with the issue. With the TF Kandahar Development Advisor involved, pressure was applied to UNAMA, who finally agreed to resettle the Kutchies in a larger, protected internally displaced persons camp: Zharey-Dasht.[172]

None of this looked good on Canada, but the behaviour of the international community and the Governor was nothing short of appalling. Indeed, Baran and his district police chiefs' motives were vile, in that they wanted the Kutchie gone so they could use the land for construction. The Kutchie nomads generally lived in the Registan District south of Panjwayi. Registan was a conduit for several enemy "ratlines" back to Quetta in Pakistan. The Kutchie now had a host of new grievances against the Afghan government that could be exploited by the Taliban, and the lack of an adroit Canadian response made the situation worse. The Kutchie were consequently less likely to assist the coalition effort in providing information on enemy movements in the lands they inhabited.

The only positive benefit from this was the Governor's increased willingness to finally use the Provincial Development Committee as a governance tool. It is possible that the Kutchie affair served as a catalyst for increased and systemic discussions between the provincial government, the PRT, the UN and non-governmental organizations on projects like the proposed highway bypass south of the city, Dahla Dam, and school construction.[173]

The National Solidarity Programme's District Development Assemblies and Community Development Councils that were supposed to be the main reconstruction and development "fronts" in the province were in a mixed state by December 2007–January 2008. There were ongoing issues between UN HABITAT and the PRT over who was to handle requests from these entities. Much of the time, the Afghans defaulted to the PRT because they could not get timely action from UN HABITAT. It was easier for a district reconstruction shura member to communicate with a Canadian CIMIC patrol, for example, than with a UN representative who rarely, if ever, came out to the districts.[174]

Arghandab District's development organizations were operational just before the death of Mullah Naqib. Naqib had been trying to remove the District Development Assembly head, who was not believed to have the best interests of the district at heart. A parallel District Development Assembly leader had credibility but the various personalities were not getting along. CIMIC and the PRT spent a lot of time working with all sides to get the development assembly running again. By January 2008, Arghandab's District Development Assembly was considered by the PRT to be a success story.[175]

As for Shah Wali Kot, the environment was deemed to be non-permissive. There was an informal development assembly but there were no community councils. Money was able to flow to lower Shah Wali Kot from the PRT system but the effects were unclear. U.S. TF 32 working with USAID was able to use their civil affairs capability for local projects in upper Shah Wali Kot and over in Khakrez, but larger programmes were not possible yet. These connections strengthened over time so that CIMIC and American Civil Affairs activity could be expeditiously deconflicted.[176]

Panjwayi was a mixed bag, as the CIMIC teams learned that each community was practically a separate district. CIMIC was only starting to get into the Mushan and Talukan areas. Sperwan was on the verge of accepting some kind of development connectivity with the Panjwayi District Development Assembly because Haji Baran came from there and Bazaar-e Panjwayi was a thriving town. Nothing was happening over in Nakhonay, for example, or in Zangabad.[177]

Dand District, however, had a functional District Development Assembly and functional Community Development Councils by January 2008, as did Spin Boldak. Zharey was another mixed bag. There was a District Development Assembly and there were some Community Development Councils but the post-Khairuddin environment was still a work-in-progress.

Most of the development occurred along Highway 1 or along Route Summit. CIMIC teams and the P-OMLTs were experimenting with connecting with the population around the police sub-stations but it was still early days. The Provincial Development Committee slowly but steadily continued to improve in quality into early 2008.[178]

Unfortunately, in mid-January 2008, UN HABITAT's representative at the PRT announced that there was no more money from Kabul to establish and support new community development councils in the province because of the security situation. The PRT found that "this is very alarming. If the National Solidarity Programme does not register new CDCs, the gap would grow even bigger between the sub-districts in Zharey." This would generate a have-have not situation in communities that were now only just starting to get security from the Afghan police and the P-OMLTs. There would be a semblance of security but no connectivity between the population and the district and provincial governments. Needs would not be met and the population would once again be subject to Taliban influence.[179]

Another chapter in Kandahar's tale of woe was added on 12 January 2007 when the No. 3 turbine at the Kajaki Dam over in Helmand Province ceased to function. Kandahar City plunged into rolling blackouts as the municipal power plant was able to only handle a handful of districts at a time.[180] Given the regional nature of the problem, there was little that Canada could do for the time being and the matter laid to rest at the door of Regional Command (South). Various options were explored, including transporting large generators used to pump out New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina but there was no quick solution.[181]

The development effort in the province was also subjected to Taliban terrorist operations. The August 2007 hostage drama, involving South Korean aid workers and the unsatisfactory conclusion of that episode whereby South Korea agreed to disengage from Afghanistan, stimulated more of the same activity. In Kandahar, the decision by the Afghan government to release Taliban commander Mullah Mansour in exchange for an Italian journalist, and the exchange of the body of Mansour's brother for five kidnapped health care workers in Maywand, only spurred the enemy on. On 18 December, six Afghan medical personnel were kidnapped near Salehan in Panjwayi District. Two days later, the Governor's secretary was assassinated. The kidnapping of American aid worker Cyd Mizell, however, had a direct impact on the PRT. Nabbed on 26 January, the Asian Rural Life Development Foundation worker disappeared from a bazaar in Kandahar City's Police District 6.[182]

American special operations forces went into overdrive trying to get her back and launched into Nakhonay, taking out three Taliban commanders. Other insurgent commanders were extremely upset with the "heat" that was brought to bear on the whole movement, especially in what appeared to outsiders like a tranquil part of Panjwayi District.[183] Unfortunately, Cyd Mizell was spirited away to Helmand, where she disappeared.

There were reports that she was subsequently murdered. The Mizell kidnapping, however, had a disproportionate effect on certain civilian elements, as this event spooked them and some used it as a reason to reduce their sortie rate outside of their bases. Indeed, the hysteria disproportionately spread throughout the aid and development community in Kandahar and nearly shut things down for some time.[184] Surprisingly, over 500 women dressed in burqas marched the streets of Kandahar in protest of the kidnapping.

The slow but discernable progress with policing in Zharey then took a body blow when four policemen disappeared from their positions near Howz-e Madad between 25 and 27 December. On 29 December, a large team of insurgents dressed as Afghan police and driving three green Afghan police Ford Rangers infiltrated a Maywand checkpoint and kidnapped 16 Afghan police. These officers were removed to Nahlgam and Band-e Timor, where they were taken in front of Taliban judges and sentenced to death. The Taliban then distributed three of the unfortunate police officers each to Kolk, Sia Choy and Band-e Timor, where they were executed publicly to intimidate the population. Of the 22 missing, 13 were confirmed to have been murdered. The JPCC noted that "the recovered bodies will be difficult to identify [as] they had been rather brutally mutilated."[185]

The "fad" caught on and three policemen were kidnapped by insurgents in Shah Wali Kot and beheaded. Panjwayi Taliban also grabbed Karim Khan, an Achakzai tribal leader and, incidentally, a personal friend of Ahmad Wali Karzai. They also seized his son and demanded money. Because of political sensitivities related to some intertribal dynamic that Canadian analysis was unable to penetrate, a negotiated release conducted outside of Canadian channels resulted in the return of both men.[186] Nonetheless, the murders continued. On 13 January, insurgents infiltrating using police uniforms and Ford Rangers entered a barracks area at a post in eastern Maywand District and killed nine police officers as they slept. Another was found zip-tied, taped and shot in the head.[187]

It was one thing to fight guerillas in the hills and in the grape fields. It was quite another to figure out how to fight this kind of insidious terrorist activity. And all the while, there was no Canadian (or international) media coverage of the outrages against medical personnel nor was there any on the savage "justice" meted out to police by what amounted to a parallel power. There was, however, intense Canadian media coverage on the detainee issue, which forced the PRT to increase the number of patrols to Sarposa Prison.[188]

Zharey District Operations, December 2007–January 2008

The decision to focus development and reconstruction resources in the Bazaar-e Panjwayi-Pashmul area was related to but not directly connected to a series of operations led by the battle group conducted in mid- to late December. The continued rocket attacks against FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, and the connections between insurgents in Sia Choy and the

violence around Kolk were two of the main drivers. In the background lay the ongoing issue of keeping Highway 1 open. The Sia Choy operation, TEREH TOORA, went in on 16 December. It was a large affair specifically targeting weapons caches and probable command nodes previously identified and assessed by the ASIC. Special resources were applied to the site dubbed the "Rock School," located at the junction of Victoria and Cornerbrook, which had been a rally point for the enemy on previous operations in Zharey.

TEREH TOORA was a 24-hour operation. Sperwer TUAVs observed the intersection of Route Brown and Fosters to ensure no one was planting IEDs. C Company departed Sperwan Ghar, moved across the Arghandab River, and took up blocking positions west of Sia Choy. C Squadron with attached infantry moved west along the riverbed to block from the south. A Gurkha company with an Afghan platoon and Canadian OMLT inserted north of Sia Choy, while recce and sniper assets watched the area east of the community from their positions on Ma'Sum Ghar. The advance started at 0500 from the north. At 0630, there was visual contact with armed insurgents carrying tubes of some type: they were engaged with close air support. Then there was word that an enemy commander was present and that he would try to exfiltrate with his protection party dressed as Afghan police. The Afghans and Gurkhas found small weapons caches as they swept the compounds. ISTAR resources reported, however, that every time the Gurkhas advanced a bound, the enemy called for help to evacuate wounded. Clearly, Sia Choy was also being used as a casualty collection point and medical facility. Eventually, the manoeuvring enemy fighters were engaged with an airstrike, killing or wounding 20 of them. One insurgent leader requested reinforcement from the "Rock School." An airstrike was directed at this area and it produced multiple detonations and secondary explosions. The enemy, running out of ammunition, melted away, leaving an estimated 47 dead with four captured by the Afghan army.[189]

LCol Gauthier shifted his attention over to the Senjaray area. ISTAR reportage suggested that the rockets fired at Ma'Sum Ghar were being dropped off from trucks passing through Senjaray. Apparently there was a cache in Makuan, a known base for trouble-makers. C Squadron took the lead and mounted Operation METAWARKAWEL SHEPPA on 21 December. A similar package which consisted of a Gurkha company, an Afghan company, Canadian mentors and combat engineers swept into Makuan, only to find a small number of weapons and no rockets.[190] The enemy were not expecting a repeat performance two days later when Operation KHWASHA SEMA came back, using the same package and coming from different directions. Little was uncovered as the enemy fled east into the built-up areas of western Kandahar City.[191]

The material results of these three operations were ambiguous. The Senjaray "cage" was "rattled" twice again and there were some disruptive effects in Sia Choy, but without detailed local information, it was difficult to bring a halt to enemy activities. It is likely

that the enemy had little or no means to conduct operations due to a lack of ammunition and leadership in the area. And, after all, it was winter with no foliage, so their ability to conduct unobserved movement in the area was restricted in any event.

The Fight for Route Fosters, December 2007–January 2008

The conclusion of Operation COUNTER IED at the end of November was no guarantee that the enemy would stop trying to isolate Karim Khan, an Achakzai tribal leader in Haji. On 6 December, a route clearance operation moving down Route Fosters detonated two IEDs with mine detonation trailers pulled by the Husky vehicles. LCol Gauthier and his planners decided to clear the Zangabad region with two objectives in mind: one, to relieve pressure on PSS Haji and, collaterally, stimulate negotiations with the Afghan security forces to take more interest in security, and to eliminate the IED makers.[192] (See Figure 2-6.)

Intensive intelligence preparation for Operation DADA SHAY identified three groups of insurgents. There were two commanders with their associated fighters in the Zangabad area and a third commander with his forces just north of the Arghandab River. The main Taliban commander in Zangabad, who had the nom de guerre "Zia Al Haq," also commanded an IED cell. Zangabad was a perfect nest for the insurgents, as were the other communities in the "horn of Panjwayi." Route Fosters, which was really an unimproved dirt road, ran along the northern part of the "horn," with tracks that went south into the communities which themselves were nestled in complex terrain made up of the usual mix of grape fields, drying huts and walled compounds. To the south of that was the Dori River and the Reg Desert. A spur of hills from central Panjwayi jutted southwest right at the Dori River.[193]

The operations box for DADA SHAY used the hills as the southern boundary and the Arghandab River as the northern boundary. As for forces, there was C Company and C Squadron, plus two Afghan army companies and Canadian OMLTs from 3rd Kandak. The operation also benefited with the addition of a company of Gurkhas from the 1st Battalion, Royal Gurkha Rifles. All of the usual supporting forces were available: X Batterie, 53e Escadron and the Sperwer TUAVs. Canadian and Gurkha snipers were inserted into positions in the southern hills at night on 7 December.[194]

The concept of operations was straightforward: a nighttime infantry insertion on two axes, followed by the Afghan army companies moving in at first light. This would occur simultaneously with the Leopard tanks from C Squadron and the battle group tactical headquarters, moving down the left flank in the open ground between the hills south of Zangabad onto Objective GUINNESS to act first as a feint and then as a block. Then the route clearance package would move down Fosters and head for PSS Haji. The infantry would clear all objectives and the force would return to FOB Ma'Sum Ghar.[195]

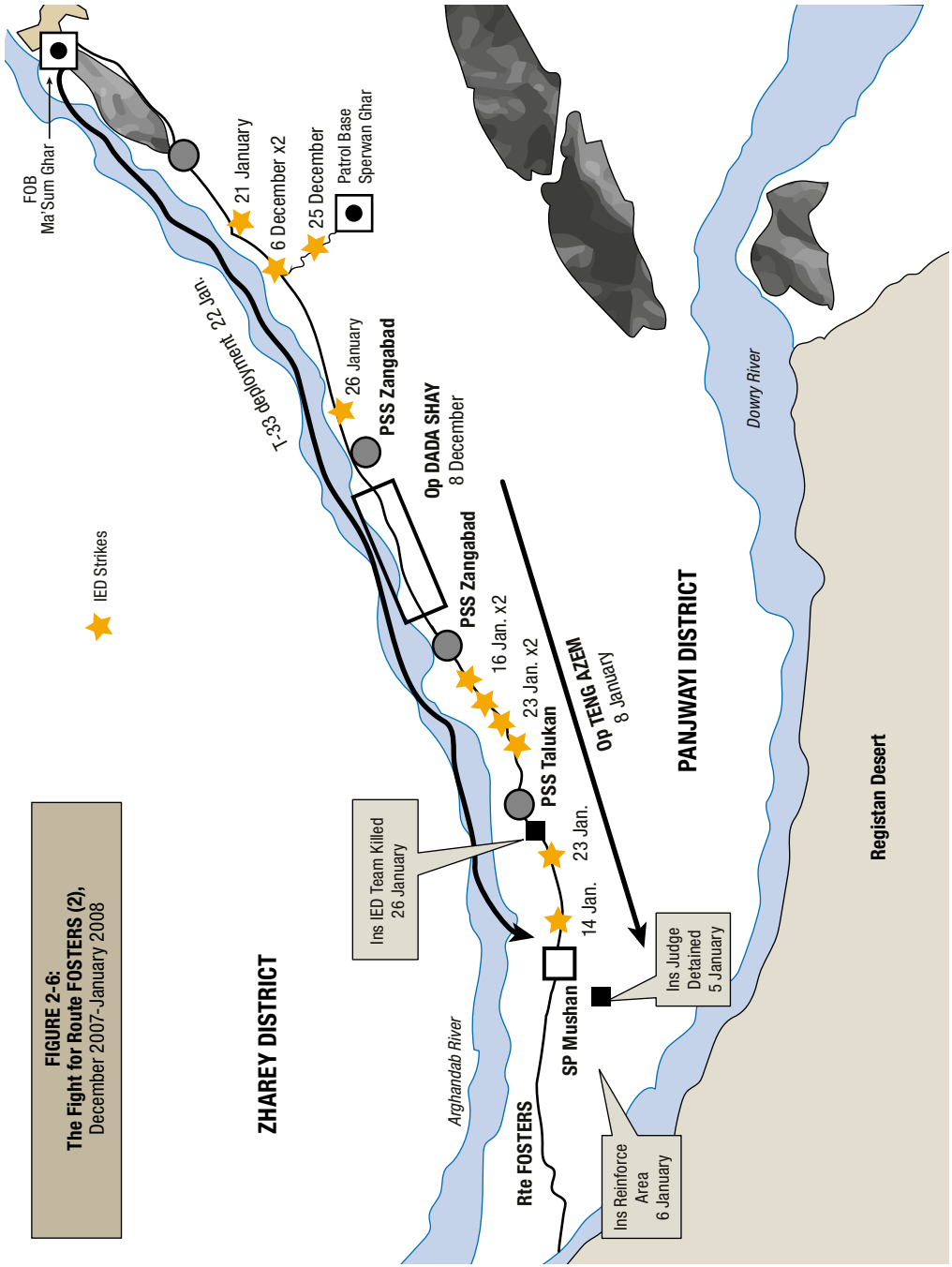


FIGURE 2-6:
The Fight for Route FOSTERS (2),
December 2007-January 2008

Figure 2-6: The Fight for Route Fosters (2), December 2007-January 2008

C Company started their dismounted moves into Objective MOLSON at 0245 hours on 8 December. The Afghans were a bit slower and moved into MOLSON an hour later. The route clearance package departed at 0515 and the mechanized feint went down the left flank at 0530. The enemy reacted sluggishly around 0700 hours: the snipers in the hills spotted movement near SLEEMAN and vectored an MQ-9 Reaper onto them, killing five fighters. The mechanized feint then spotted over 20 enemy making their way toward their fighting positions west of the LABATT operations box: a Sperwer TUAV came on station, identified the enemy to distinguish them from civilians, and directed a pair of 500-pound bombs onto them, killing at least ten.[196]

Photo Credit: DND

Afghan infantry, Gurkhas, and Canadian tanks advance to contact during Operation DADA SHAY.

By this time, the Gurkhas moved through MOLSON into Objective MILLER, and the engineers made good progress down Fosters, detonating explosives as they found them. By 0930, MOLSON and SLEEMAN were cleared, and the Gurkhas were working on MILLER. The battle group tactical headquarters, operating as part of the feint, was then attacked with mortars, recoilless rifle and RPG fire. There was damage to some of the vehicles but no mobility kills, so they were ordered to get out of range. One of the Leopard 2s responded with fire and killed four enemy fighters. Another took on an RPG team, eliminating them as well. At 1115 hours, the engineers made it to PSS Haji

and the enemy pulled back to the west of the operations area. C Company then ran into resistance in Objective GUINNESS and a gunfight broke out with 18 insurgents. Using Sperwer TUAV information, the Canadian infantry tracked down and eliminated all of the fighters among the compound complexes and grape huts. A Taliban mortar joined in the action until its crew was dispatched by sniper fire. The snipers then spotted more enemy movement and brought an airstrike down on eight fighters, killing them.[197]

The Sperwer TUAV-artillery combination continued to track and kill enemy exfiltrating the area. X Batterie conducted ten fire missions during this period. The battle group command post back at KAF joined in: using a Sperwer TUAV feed, the tactical air controller was able to vector in an airstrike, killing seven more enemy. The operation was marred by a "blue on blue" when Canadian forces engaged each other by accident, wounding two. At least five Afghan soldiers were wounded throughout the day but there were no coalition forces deaths. The DADA SHAY force withdrew late in the afternoon.[198]

Enemy activity dropped off. The EROC counter-IED teams cleared Fosters on 17 December and then again on 24 December so that a combat logistics patrol could resupply PSS Haji. The problem remained: Fosters was a dirt road, which narrowed into a dirt track in places as it wound its way through complex terrain that severely canalized movement. On Christmas Day, an IED was discovered on Route Brown and blown in place. The enemy were back. It was gratifying to finally grapple with the enemy in a stand-up fight but once again, operations like DADA SHAY had short-term effects as there was no "Hold" to go with the "Clear."

The larger matter of what to do about the "horn of Panjwayi" related to how to conduct the "Hold," and this was subject to serious problems relating to governance in Panjwayi District as well as internal issues within the Afghan security forces. The existing chain of police and army outposts along Route Fosters was seriously decaying, and the situation in Mushan continued to deteriorate. The larger TF Kandahar SHA AYENDA plan had Canadian forces departing Panjwayi and Zharey before the relief in place with 2 PPCLI Battle Group in February so that that relief in place could happen in Shah Wali Kot. This meant that the Afghan security forces had to be in place and operating from proper facilities in Panjwayi long before then.

The concept that the Afghans would occupy police sub-stations and strong points along Fosters seemed to revolve around the idea that the police and army would patrol the communities that lay to the south of these facilities. In reality, the "horn" resembled Zharey in that a lattice of stations and strong points was needed given the depth of places like Zangabad from the road and the poor connectivity between them. It appears, however, that the fluctuating number of assigned Afghan forces meant that just handling Route Fosters was barely feasible.

The sticking point for the Afghan army was Mushan. Despite the fact that the enemy were extremely sensitized to any coalition presence in Mushan because of its centrality, the 3rd Kandak commander and staff argued that they could not resupply a company if they manned a strong point there. Then they complained about having to man OP Mosque. Fundamentally, the Afghan National Army did not want to man tactical infrastructure, and they certainly did not want to work with the Panjwayi police. There were several clashes between the increasingly professional Afghan National Army and what amounted to partially-trained thugs led by corrupt officials: at least that is how the army leadership portrayed things. On the police side, the P-OMLT reported that the Panjwayi police chief claimed to have men ready to go and man sub-stations, but the reality was that he did not. The dispute continued over manning PSS Haji. The Panjwayi police leadership refused to man this vital position, claiming they could not resupply it.[199] The relationship between presence patrolling, getting to know the local population, and thus stopping IED emplacement so that safe resupply could take place was a concept that the Panjwayi police leadership found difficult to grasp. At the same time, grievances generated by the district leader amongst the local population did not help matters at all.

The OMLT and P-OMLT mentors engaged all players to generate a compromise. The Afghan army agreed to deploy a platoon to Mushan with Canadian mentors. Higher-level officials were engaged to get more police, though it was not yet clear where they would come from. With all of this in the background, the battle group launched Operation TENG AZEM on 1 January 2008.

The stated objective of the operation was to isolate Nahlgam and set the conditions for an enduring ANSF presence in both Zharey and Panjwayi Districts. The method was to establish four strong points and police sub-stations, one on Langley and three on Fosters.[200] The preliminary moves, conducted on 13 January, had Recce Squadron deploy a Coyote troop to the Maywand–Zharey border area to block the west; a mix of MEWT, forward observation officer/forward air controller and armour deployed to Strong Point Ghundy Ghar, and snipers inserted into the Reg Desert south of Mushan. The Gurkhas sent their forward logistics point to Ghundy Ghar and then followed with a company transported by CH-47. On 3 January, the Gurkhas moved into Nahlgam as a diversion, while a C Squadron combat team departed Ma'Sum Ghar. C Squadron took a very different route, skirting the Kabari Ghar feature to the east before proceeding south to the Dori River and then west where they hooked up with the snipers the next day.[201] On 5 January, a pair of insurgents were engaged from Ghundy Ghar as the EROC clearance team moved south on Route Langley. B Company, unfortunately, suffered a vehicle accident which killed WO Hani Massouh and Cpl Eric Labbé.[202]

The Gurkha Company extracted on 7 January with no contact. The coalition forces made no other contact. Due to poor environmental conditions at the bottom of Route Langley related to the high water table, the decision was made not to build PSS Montreal. Construction of Strong Point Mushan, however, commenced. The enemy proceeded to mortar the site until X Batterie brought 16 rounds of high explosives to bear. Construction teams then moved to sites north of Talukan and Zangabad, where police sub-stations were sited and built. The enemy infiltrated the Mushan area and laid mines, some of which were detonated by the EROC, wounding four, and a command wire IED targeted a Leopard from C Squadron on 14 January. Another IED took out a Coyote, killing Trooper Richard Renaud the next day. Aerial medical evacuation was impossible because of the weather, so the decision was made to move out on the ground. On 16 January, another IED strike one kilometre east of Mushan on Fosters wounded seven Canadians. The tanks found themselves in a contact with RPG teams and were forced to shoot their way out of the trap.[203]

The OMLT and the Afghan company were now ensconced in Strong Point Mushan and initiated presence patrols in the nearby bazaar. This activity produced a flood of local information on enemy movements. ISTAR reportage flowed in and indicated that the enemy were planning to scatter IEDs on all of the routes in and out of Mushan.[204] The ring around Nahlgam remained unfinished, however, and it was still not clear who was going to man the police sub-stations along Fosters north of Talukan and Zangabad. Furthermore, analysis of the various explosive events indicated that the devices were not all improvised. Some of the weapons were plastic anti-tank mines and the EROC was not capable of detecting them at all.[205]

Route Fosters now attracted every IED maker and mine layer the insurgents could muster. Five Afghan civilians were killed when they struck a device on 21 January. When C Squadron mounted a resupply operation to Mushan, one of their armoured recovery vehicles hit an IED, disabling it, on 22 January. On 23 January, a LAV III from 52e Escadron was disabled, killing Cpl Étienne Gonthier and wounding two other soldiers. A Leopard from the QRF struck another device with its rollers, disabling the vehicle. In the space of one week, there were nine IED or mine strikes killing three Canadian soldiers and five Afghans civilians, with another 15 or so Canadians wounded.

Intensive ISTAR resources were assigned to the Route Fosters area on 25 January. The following evening, during TF Kandahar's barbecue night in the command compound, there was an ISTAR "hit." A Sperwer TUAV was launched and vectored onto the grid where the crew identified a dig team in the process of laying an IED on Route Fosters. The headquarters personnel crowded into the Provincial Operations Centre to watch as a French Mirage fighter bomber released a GBU onto the dig team, killing them. One wounded insurgent staggered away as a MQ-1 Predator came online to replace the TUAV.

The Predator crew followed the wounded insurgent to a compound where they identified another ten insurgents. Word was passed to the OMLT, who contacted their mentors in the field, and an Afghan army patrol was launched to exploit the dig site and raid the compound. They bagged half a dozen insurgents without incident.[206] Using the information gained by the exploitation, Maj Robichaud mounted a raid into Zangabad on 30 January with C Company and uncovered IED-making materials.[207]

The informal but tight relationship between TF Kandahar and the American MQ-9 Reaper Squadron led to an experiment in using a Reaper's sensors to scan and map Route Fosters and then run comparison flights to see if earth on the roadbed had been disturbed in the intervening period. These experiments were considered a success, so a combination of TUAV and MQ-9 Reapers focused on looking for possible "dig sites" to cue patrols to those sites for assessment.[208]

The situation along Route Fosters in western Panjwayi now took on unanticipated dimensions. The strong point at Mushan, the police sub-stations on the road north of Talukan and Zangabad, plus PSS Haji, all had to be manned and resupplied. There appeared to be a lack of concept of local operations, there was a lack of local buy-in at the district police level, and the Afghan army was not convinced about the efficacy of sustaining Mushan. Without the unbuilt PSS Montreal, there was no way to isolate Nahlgam. The lack of a paved road made Route Fosters susceptible to IED emplacement, and that road project would take months using the imposed technology. This state of affairs did not bode well for the coalition effort in Panjwayi or Zharey Districts.

Policing and Clear-Hold-Build, January–February 2008

Recalling that TF Kandahar embraced the "Clear-Hold-Build" operating concept, what was the status of the Canadian and Afghan effort in Zharey and Panjwayi Districts by February 2008? There was a coalition presence in both districts, but it was debatable whether they were Clear enough to Hold. Yes, there was a network of police sub-stations in Zharey, covered by Strong Point Gundy Ghar in the west, and anchored by Patrol Base Wilson and FOB Ma'Sum Ghar. Yes, there was a string of police sub-stations along Fosters West anchored by Strong Point Mushan and FOB Ma'Sum Ghar. Yes, there were varying amounts of development and reconstruction activities and there was a semblance of governance in both districts, but the districts were not cleared nor were they held. For example, on the map there were PSSs Talukan and Zangabad. When briefed, it appeared as though, because of the names, that there were police sub-stations in each community. This was not accurate. The sub-stations were small forts located on Route Fosters, which paralleled the Arghandab River. They were not police stations situated in the middle of the communities of Talukan and Zangabad, which lay one or more kilometres south of

the road. Similarly, a lattice of police sub-stations in Zharey looked progressive on a map. Qualitatively, however, how far did the police range from their fortifications? How alert were they? Were there, in fact, enough police to man the police sub-stations and at the same time mount presence patrols? Were they holding ground, or interacting with the population so that governance and development could be facilitated?

The brunt of this problem fell on the Canadian P-OMLT mentors working with the Afghan police in the police sub-stations or, in some cases, operating by themselves in the case of PSS Haji, and others later on. Police sub-station Kolk was an example of where the system worked. The police and their mentors did patrol out of Kolk, met the population, and developed a network of informants who passed on information to the Joint District Coordination Centre or the Afghan National Directorate of Security. Police sub-station Pashmul was also starting to have a similar effect. It was clear from ISTAR reportage that the enemy hated the police operating from PSSs Kolk and Haji. Police sub-station Haji got hit regularly, as we have seen, and the P-OMLT was integral to its defence.[209]

Other police sub-stations were more problematic. There was a cultural problem that revealed itself within the Canadian Military Police under the pressure of P-OMLT operations. Cold War-era Military Police tasks like route control and rear area combat operations had withered away during the "peacekeeping" period of the 1990s. Attempts by the 1990s Military Police leadership in Ottawa to make the Military Police officers more like beat cops for the base married-quarters areas were successful but ultimately detrimental. When some Military Police who had joined under that regime deployed to Afghanistan and then were told they were going to a police sub-station to work with Afghan police, they balked. Maj Michel Zybala, the Military Police Company commander, had to reorganize the P-OMLTs carefully so that they contained a mix of ex-combat arms Military Police who had the weapons and tactical skill sets that the civilianized Military Police did not possess. Gender issues also reared their heads when the Afghan police were suddenly confronted with working and living with female Military Police. Some Afghan police refused outright to work with them, which attenuated operations in some locations. Others had little issue with co-educational policing and figured out that having female police available was useful for searching Afghan females.[210]

The P-OMLTs and their Afghan counterparts, however, could only hold the line so long. For example, there were only 240 or so police in Panjwayi District, many of them only partially trained. That was not enough for the militia-type and policing tasks they were asked to undertake. Panjwayi and Zharey Districts needed an injection of trained, motivated and loyal police if there was to be any hope of holding those portions of the districts that had a coalition presence.

As previously discussed, the admission by Germany that they could no longer handle the policing portfolio led to the Dubai meetings in 2007 whereby the Americans agreed to revamp and fund Afghan policing programmes. The arrival of the U.S. Police Mentoring Teams in fall 2007 was a stopgap. By early 2008, a solution was under discussion: this was called the Focused District Development or FDD plan. This was the next phase of a police professionalization plan that the Americans initiated in summer 2007. The plan involved pay and rank reform, payroll transparency to reduce corruption, and identification cards. Those programmes were underway by November 2007. The goal of the Focused District Development plan was to "strengthen the [Afghan Uniformed Police] linkage to the provincial, regional, and national leaders and staff" to get them away from local tribal politics. A targeted district would have all of its police removed to a regional training centre where they would be screened, retrained for eight weeks in matters related to the chain of command and the justice system, given new leaders and then re-inserted back into the district. The Afghan National Civil Order Police or ANCOP would be brought in to backfill the district while the local police were away.[211]

Focused District Development was not an ISAF plan: it came down from the American Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan, which was an Operating ENDURING FREEDOM owned structure in Kabul. As such, its resources, including the American mentors, did not fall under ISAF command. The immediate problem was that Canada led the ISAF effort in Kandahar Province, but did not have any apparent influence on CSTC-A and the Focused District Development plan in the same way Canada did not have influence on American SOF activities. In other words, there was an absence of unity of effort, while at the same time there was substantial overlap. Word trickled down to the PRT that the Canadian embassy, apparently, did not want to hear about Focused District Development because it was an American project and did not want to get involved in the problem at the Kabul end.[212]

Focused District Development for Zharey and Panjwayi was scheduled for February 2008: at exactly the same time, the 3 R22eR Battle Group was to conduct a relief in place with the incoming 2 PPCLI Battle Group, and the Afghan kandaks were also rotating during their cycle. And no one could predict what the Afghan provincial chief of police, General Saqib, would have to say about "his" police being subjected to the Focused District Development plan, let alone what Haji Baran might have to say down in Panjwayi.[213] There were just too many cooks in the kitchen when it came to policing in Kandahar.

Power Brokerage, Kandahar Style

On 17 February 2008, several hundred Afghan spectators crowded on a field next to the river in Arghandab District to watch a regional dog fight. In the midst of the event, a bomb exploded and men wearing police uniforms fired into the crowd with automatic weapons. At KAF, the mass casualty siren tones came over the "Giant Voice" system and personnel descended on the Canadian-led Role 3 hospital, waiting for wounded. The attack swamped Mirwais Hospital and the Afghan National Army facilities at Camp Hero, so more sophisticated wounds like head injuries went to the Role 3 at KAF for triage and care. In the end, 100 Afghans were wounded and 80 killed. It was the largest civilian death toll in Afghanistan since 2001.[214]

Strangely, the Taliban did not take credit for the attack as they had in other mass casualty events in place, like Spin Boldak, where hundreds had been killed over the years as suicide bombers kept trying to kill Col. Raziq. Indeed, a suicide attack the next day in Spin Boldak killed some 30 people and wounded another 30. The Taliban did take credit for that one. And, on 19 February, another suicide attack took place west of Kandahar City but nowhere near the scale of the other two attacks: there were two dead and four wounded civilians. All three devices were different and there appeared to be no connection between the attacks.

When all was said and done, TF Kandahar learned that Hakim Jan and the bulk of his Afghan National Auxiliary Police had been killed in the incident. This was yet another stunning blow to the Alikozais and Arghandab District. And, over time, it appeared as though Hakim Jan was the primary target of the suicide bomb which was delivered by a man dressed as a police officer.

The implications were not apparent to TF Kandahar in the immediate aftermath. The media assumed it was a Taliban attack and treated it accordingly. A lot of effort was spent trying to determine whether the three attacks were connected or if they were independent events. The reality was that the Dog Fight Massacre eventually destabilized Arghandab District almost as much as Mullah Naqib's death. But there was more. Hakim Jan's death, when placed against other incidents, indicated that there was a concerted attempt to eliminate Alikozai influence from the Kandahar political scene: the marginalization of Alikozai allies like Habibullah Jan in Senjaray; the removal of Col. Hakim and his men from provincial policing; the police-on-police violence in November 2007; and now Hakim Jan's death along with most of his men. At the time, however, TF Kandahar was not connecting the dots and there was a paucity of analysis coming from those handling the governance portfolio at the PRT. The implications, however, were long term and had a significant impact on the subsequent TF Kandahar under the command of BGen Denis Thompson later in 2008.

Trouble Brewing in Dand District, January 2008

Dand District was, for all intents and purposes, a quiet, prosperous suburb of Kandahar City, with a mix of urban and rural activity under the able leadership of the young but exceptionally capable Ahmadullah Nazak. Dand was aligned with the Barakzais, specifically, the former governor Gul Agha Sherzai whose representatives remained in the province to protect their interests in the face of Popalzai domination of the political and security processes. The PRT deployed CIMIC patrols to Dand in September and in no time was able to connect with the District Development Assembly. Community Development Councils, some of which already existed, were then linked up to the development assembly. Project monies started to flow soon after, and by the end of 2007, Dand was a district that was going places. Geographically, Dand was a sort of crossroads between eastern Panjwayi District, the southwestern Kandahar City districts, and KAF, which lay to the southeast through a gap in the mountain spine. Indeed, the planned Kandahar City bypass road project was supposed to go through Dand from Highway 4, though the exact configuration was still in dispute.[215]

As Dand's prosperity grew, so did insurgent intimidation. The OMLT in Panjwayi reported that the insurgents established a court in Nakhonay, thus challenging the government for legitimacy there.[216] CIMIC reported that there was insurgent theft and threats of kidnapping, then there was a pair of RPG attacks against the police as they sought to maintain security in the area bordering Panjwayi. Nazak only had 45 policemen for the entire district and they were now led by the infamous Col. Akka, formerly of Zharey District (indeed, Akka's arrival seemed to coincide with increased insurgent intimidation directed at Dand's civilian population). Akka deployed his resources in a series of checkpoints along the interdistrict boundary but this led to increased attacks against the police. The violence was, however, not internal to Dand. Dand's power structure incorporated the mullahs at the community level, where they worked alongside the maliks and as such were able to bring a better synergy to bear on local problems, which, in turn, made many of the communities resistant to the Taliban message and afforded increased information to the police.

In fact, most of the violence was coming from Nakhonay over in Panjwayi. Nazak and his people knew this, but they also understood, and articulated to the CIMIC team, that ISAF was spread thin and would not be able to prioritize Dand. Therefore, Dand had to be as self-sufficient as possible. Nazak and his community leaders had a cell-phone network and had recently activated their own Joint District Coordination Centre. They knew they could not withstand a deliberate insurgent assault but, at the least, they could and were deterring their intimidation efforts. Dand was stable but given its defiance of the Taliban and its geographical importance, it was unclear how long this success story could be maintained without challenging the insurgency in Nakhonay. And that was dependent on how well things went in the western part of Panjwayi District.

Maywand on the Brink, February 2008

The police massacre in mid-January was a significant indicator that the situation was deteriorating in Maywand, with the possibility that the insurgents could interfere with the Highway 1 Main Service Route to Helmand. However, the state of play was not clear-cut. Maywand was, for the most part, terra incognita except along Highway 1. The strip of communities that paralleled the Arghandab River to the north, Band-e Timor, was a known insurgent route to and from Helmand. It was believed to be a logistics support area, for Zharey and Panjwayi. This was why the community of Mushan was so important in that the tip of the "horn of Panjwayi" was a crossroads between all three districts. North of the city of Hutal lay the Garmabak Pass into lower Ghorak District.

Haji Saifullah, a man with multiple loyalty vectors, ruled Maywand District. Like Habibullah Jan and others to the east on Highway 1, Saifullah's police were in the toll business. As General Saqib's influences moved west, however, and Habibullah Jan and Col. Akka were marginalized, there was the inevitability of conflict between the two men and their backers. And, as with everything else, this had an impact on Canadian operations.

On 13 February, a World Food Programme convoy was attacked as it passed over the Zharey–Maywand District border. A Sperwer TUAV happened to be observing the area and was directed over the incident while the OMLT at Howz-e Madad dispatched an RG-31 patrol. The TUAV's crew observed the hijackers as they absconded with a truck and its contents. The hijackers were wearing Afghan police uniforms and were seen to meet with people with connections to the district leader. General Saqib used this event as an excuse to replace, one for one, all of the Maywand police with police from Kandahar. Haji Saifullah, with the loss of his "muscle," was somewhat annoyed.[217]

At the same time, TF Kandahar was planning the battle group and OMLT relief in place, which was scheduled to start at the end of February. The Regional Battle Group (South) was currently at TF Kandahar's disposal, but the issue revolved around whether or not there would be some form of enduring effect by sending a battle group into Maywand for a short period. There was an opportunity to disrupt the insurgent logistics system into Zharey and Panjwayi and the ASIC believed that the insurgents were low on ammunition. An operation into Maywand could draw off enemy resources while the inevitably chaotic relief in place took place. Working with Lt. Col. Johnny Bourne's 1st Battalion, Royal Gurkha Rifles, TF Kandahar developed Operation SOHIL LARAM II. The Gurkhas, supported with Canadian artillery, CIMIC, and PSYOPS would sweep into Band-e Timor, while 2nd Kandak of the Afghan army and Canadian mentors would move into Hutal with the new police and rebuild the checkpoint system along Highway 1.

Photo Credit: Author

Operation SOHIL LARAM II focused on the enemy "ratlines" in Band-e Timor and the city of Hutal, which was the district headquarters and an important waypoint on the main service route to Helmand Province. Hutal was also a crucial economic centre. Canadian army and police mentors with their Afghan counterparts operated from this location, which an Afghan soldier and his 23mm cannon contemplates.

SOHIL LARAM II was launched in the early hours of 21 February. The Gurkhas deployed their Viking and Vector ground vehicles from KAF all the way to blocking positions between Highway 1 and Band-e Timor. This deception move was timed with a nighttime air assault conducted by RAF Chinooks and Lynxes, which landed the Gurkha infantry at each end of Band-e Timor. With the vehicle block in place and pressure from the east and west, enemy forces tried to flee south into the Reg Desert, where around 15 were killed by a combination of an MQ-1 Predator, an MQ-9 Reaper and a B-1B bomber dropping guided munitions. A Canadian M-777 detachment situated in the Dasht provided artillery support as required.

Photo Credit: Author

Operation SOHIL LARAM II had Canadian elements supporting the 1st Battalion Royal Gurkha Rifles deployed to Maywand District under Canadian command. This included an artillery detachment of M-777 guns as well as CIMIC and PSYOPS teams.

The Afghan police and Afghan National Army troops moved into Hutal the next day and immediately started joint police–army patrols, to the chagrin of Haji Saifullah, who was dismayed that the government had come to town. Canadian CIMIC and PSYOPS teams ranged out with Afghan and Gurkha patrols. The operation was marred by the negligent discharge of an RPG, which killed seven Afghan soldiers, but ISTAR reportage indicated that several insurgent commanders who were transiting the area were trapped. One used a non-governmental organization that was Taliban-infiltrated to escape, using their vehicles and papers.

In a matter of a week, the Gurkhas were withdrawn, as was the bulk of 2nd Kandak. A platoon from 2nd Kandak, plus the Canadian PSYOPS and CIMIC teams remained behind, as did a detachment from 53e Escadron, which rebuilt the Afghan police checkpoints on the highway. The new police settled in and immediately developed sources in the bazaar that led them to suppress insurgent activities in the city. Band-e Timor, however, reverted back to Taliban influence but not in time for the enemy to build up weapons and ammunition to have any effect on the relief in place that was underway by the end of February. And, most importantly, the coalition now had a foothold in Maywand. But could that foothold be maintained?

Photo Credit: Author

The accidental discharge of a rocket-propelled grenade killed seven Afghan soldiers from 2nd Kandak, led by Lt.-Col. Sherin Shah, seen here at the back roving the incident site providing encouragement to medical efforts. Canadian OMLT personnel, led by Capt William Cooper (kneeling), worked against the clock to save and evacuate the injured.

Conclusions

After an initial stumble during the August 2007 relief in place, the incoming JTF Afghanistan headquarters recovered by establishing its long-term plan and several new mechanisms to implement it. The Afghan–Canadian plan, GARRANDAY ZMARAY, had the laudable goal of making the Afghans responsible for the security Hold in Zharey and Panjwayi Districts and extricating the Canadian battle group to southern Shah Wali Kot District, where both the Afghan and Canadian governments were keen to focus on the remediation of the Dahla Dam and its associated irrigation systems.

A crucial and important synergy emerged with the creation of the Joint District Co-ordination Centres, first in Spin Boldak and then in Zharey and Panjwayi, and their later connection to the existing JPCC in Kandahar. The Joint District Coordination Centres provided key elements for a counterinsurgency campaign: connectivity with the population; input from the local power structure; and a higher degree of coordination between the security forces, specifically the Afghan police and army, than had been achieved thus far. The addition of CIMIC to district-level operations was a powerful enabler when it could be employed effectively. The Joint District Coordination Centres were not perfect instruments but they went a long way toward improving Canadian–Afghan operations in key districts.

Similarly, the deployment of the P-OMLTs to work with the Afghan police in those districts and help them "plug in" to the Joint District Coordination Centres and their superiors in Kandahar City was a notable success over time (once Canadian personnel matters were dealt with). Though the P-OMLTs would continue to be the poor cousin to the OMLT in many ways, they proved to be crucial enablers at the community and district levels.

Another area of significant progress was with the Canadian—Afghan National Army relationship. Building on the solid base established by the previous rotation, the OMLT facilitated more and more Afghan National Army operations and, as such, moved from putting an "Afghan face" on operations to encouraging and then conducting mentored Afghan operations at the kandak level. The OMLT came into its own throughout 2007 and these were significant improvements over the situation as it existed in 2006.

Unfortunately, a number of things retarded this progress. First, there was the policing "Tower of Babel," where police assistance from three international coalitions, two countries, one corporation and four policing organizations was conducted in an uncoordinated fashion with three separate Afghan police forces throughout 2007. Understandably, these attempts to backfill a longstanding deficiency generated in Kabul were incoherent at first. Related to this was, by late 2007, the fact that the PRT recognized that the judicial system, which was supposed to support the police, was in worse shape that had been understood.

The traditional law enforcement triumvirate was in disarray but any initial steps taken would be small given the magnitude of the problem: southern Afghanistan was nearly a post-Apocalyptic environment and there was no quick fix, no matter how many people in Ottawa demanded that there be one.

Second, interagency coordination issues aggravated by a palpable recoil by aid providers in the wake of the Taliban kidnapping and intimidation campaign threw those efforts back, specifically in the crucial organizations that were supposed to support the Community Development Councils and District Development Assemblies. These organizations were critical for the delivery of projects and programmes at the district and community levels. Third, insurgent parasitism and the taint that went along with it also undermined development efforts in the demining and health care delivery fields.

With all of that as a backdrop, Operation INITIZAAR ZMAREY must be held up as a major Canadian and Afghan success. The anticipation of insurgent incursions into Arghandab District, in the wake of Mullah Naqib's death and the subsequent operations to eject the enemy before they could establish a foothold in this crucial district, was a major Canadian and Afghan victory. On the downside, the inability to consolidate that success was a major failure, which had long-term effects. The dynamics of the Kandahari power structure and the misplaced priorities it established in the wake of the operation hampered that consolidation, and this intersected with the larger policing problems that were extant.

Connected to this was the failure of those involved in dealing with governance issues to comprehend and then react appropriately to the marginalization of and, ultimately, the outright elimination of the Alikozai power structure in Kandahar Province. This also had long-term effects on the Canadian mission beyond 2007. Over time, the population became less and less inclined to trust the Government of Afghanistan and its representatives in Kandahar Province. This situation seriously contributed to a crisis of legitimacy but this will be explored in later chapters.

Another unanticipated consequence of the operational design established in August–September 2007 was the fight for Route Fosters in the early part of 2008. Almost a battle unto itself, Canadians learned the hard way that maintaining the infrastructure necessary to surround the Nahlgam-centered insurgent node and open up connections between the rural area of western Panjwayi and the governmental centre Bazaar-e Panjwayi was an expensive proposition. The Canadian contingent did not realize it yet, but with the lack of police to man these positions, and a resurgent enemy after the poppy harvest, Canadian soldiers were going to become "trapped in the TI" (as the Tactical Infrastructure was called). That drama is central to the course of events in the next chapter.

ENDNOTES

1. As explained to the author by BGen Guy Laroche (KAF, 5 March 2008).
2. The interpreters at the PRT were heard to call Quebecois soldiers "The Tabarnac Men" when the first Van Doo Company deployed as part of force protection to Camp Nathan Smith in late 2006.
3. Interview with LCol Bob Chamberlain (Camp Nathan Smith, 27 January 2008).
4. Briefing by TFK Force Engineering Office (Kandahar, 4 February 2008). BGen Grant was reported as saying, "I'm not going to turn Zharey and Panjwayi into an engineering playground."
5. JTF-A HQ Presentation, "Joint Effects Coordinating Board" (16 August 2007).
6. Based on the author's observation of the JTF-A HQ Effects Synchronization Meeting in action in early 2008 and discussions with its participants.
7. Interview with MGen Marquis Hainse (Kandahar, 24 January 2008).
8. Discussion with SOF personnel; JTF-A HQ End of Tour Report briefing (23 May 2008); Interview with Major Mathieu Boutin (Kandahar, 5 February 2008). Interview with LCol Bob Chamberlain (Camp Nathan Smith, 27 January 2008).
9. Boutin interview.
10. Meeting with BGen Guy Laroche (Kandahar, 23 January 2008); Discussions with Col "Spike" Hazleton, Kandahar, 2 March 2008; discussions with BGen Marquis Haines (Kandahar, 24 January 2008); discussions with Maj Randy Graddic (Kandahar, 13 February 2008); Chamberlain interview.
11. Discussion with Major Eric Landry (Mushan, 24 April 2011). Landry recounted to me how Laroche was disengaged from the planning process and left it up to Fournier and him to handle.
12. JTF-A HQ "Commander's Planning Guidance: Op SHA AYENDA Commander's Action Plan" (12 August 2007).
13. Chamberlain interview.
14. JTF-A HQ "Operation SHA AYENDA: Commander's Action Plan Information Brief" (27 August 2007).
15. Ibid.
16. JTF-A HQ "Commander's Action Plan Orientation Brief" (11 August 2007).
17. Ibid.
18. Briefing deck, "TFK ROTO 4 End-Tour Report" (23 May 2008).
19. Sean M. Maloney, "Towards Clear-Hold-Build," Unpublished paper.
20. Chamberlain interview.
21. Briefings to the author (KAF, 23 and 25 January 2008).
22. Ibid.
23. The controversial Dutch-Australian relationship with Matiullah Khan is discussed in "*Warlord, Inc.: Extortion and Corruption Along the U.S. Supply Chain in Afghanistan,*" Report of the Majority Staff of the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform U.S. House of Representatives (June 2010), pp. 25-26.
24. Briefings to the author (KAF, 23 and 25 January 2008).
25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. TFK DSRs (1–3 August 2007).
29. TFK DSR (4 August 2007).
30. Chamberlain interview.
31. TFK DSR (4 August 2007).
32. TFK DSRs (6 and 10 August 2007).
33. TF 3-07 DSRs (10-11 August 2007); TFK DSR (10 August 2007).
34. NSE DSR (11 August 2007).
35. JPCC DSR (17 August 2007).
36. JPCC DSR (23 August 2007).
37. OMLT DSR (22 August 2007).
38. TF 3-07 "Rapport Post-Operation – Op BERKHEH STERBEH 21-23 Aout 2007" (26 August 2007). There are two PORs, one for each infantry company. See also TF 3-07 DSR (22 and 23 August 2007) and my untranscribed interview with tankers who witnessed the IED strikes.
39. Ibid.
40. TF 3-07 DSR, J2 DSR (23 August 2007).
41. CIMIC DSR Zharey District (22 August 2007).
42. TF 3-07 DSR (28 August 2007).
43. TF 3-07 DSRs (1 and 2 September 2007).
44. Interview with Major Eric Sauvé (Kandahar, 25 January 2008).
45. JTF-A HQ "Operation GARRANDAY ZMARAY Concept of Operations" (27 August 2007).
46. Sauvé interview.
47. OMLT DSRs (23, 24 and 28 August 2007).
48. Discussions with DynCorp trainers and RCMP CIVPOL, FOB SCORPION (26 January 2008); Policing briefing to the author (Camp Nathan Smith 26 January 2008); Interview with Major Michel Zybala (Kandahar, 4 February 2008). The author observed U.S. PMT operations in the field in January–February 2008 where LTC Ritz expressed his views on Afghanistan and Indochina.
49. Zybala interview.
50. Policing issues briefing to the author (Camp Nathan Smith, 26 January 2008).
51. This anecdote was recounted to me by P-OMLT and CIVPOL personnel at the PRT in February 2008.
52. TF 3-07 "Rapport Post Opération Op BALYE DEWEY 2 Au 3 et Sept 2007." (3 September 2007); OMLT DSR (3 September 2007).
53. "Rapport Post Opération – Op KHAIR KHOWHAI, Période Couvrant 8 et 9 September 2007" (9 September 2007); TF 3-07 DSRs (9-11 September 2007).
54. TF 3-07 DSRs (10-11 September 2007).

55. OMLT DSR (19 September 2007).

56. JPCC DSR (7 September 2007).

57. JTF-A HQ WSR (9-15 September 2007).

58. J2 DSR (1 October 2007).

59. LTC Ritz was believed by many to be personally unsupportive of Canadian efforts in Kandahar Province. This was in part apparently connected to an early incident in his tour when he called for assistance on the radio during an event but the battle group unit he was calling refused to speak English to him and insisted that he speak French. The PMT was then, in his view, abandoned by TF 3-07 for three days without resupply. When I asked why he had not reported this to JTF-A HQ, I was told that LTC Ritz was "not a complainer." Discussions with DynCorp trainers and RCMP CIVPOL, FOB SCORPION (26 January 2008); further discussions between the author and LTC Ritz, throughout early February 2008.

60. Ibid.

61. JPCC DSR (25 September 2007).

62. Confidential interview.

63. PRT DSR (7 August 2007).

64. PRT DSR (10 August 2007).

65. PRT DSRs (10 August and 6 September 2007).

66. JPCC DSR (6 September 2007).

67. C Sqn Briefing, "Op SAMANDARY TOOFAN" (4 September 2007); TF 3-07 "Rapport Post-Operation Op SIERA (SAMANDARY TOOFAN)" (6 September 2007).

68. TF 3-07 DSR (15 September 2007). See also C Company POR "Op SOHLA ARAME."

69. TF 3-07 DSR (17 September 2007).

70. "Rapport Post Operation, Op SADIQ SARBAAZ" (26 September 2007); briefing slide, "C/S T3 TIC operation SADIQ SARBAAZ 241204Z Final." There was a debate over what weapon hit the ARV and killed Cpl Hornburg. The 82mm mortar round may have been an indirect loft of an RPG but the belief in the squadron was that an 82mm recoilless round hit the vehicle and that this was kept quiet to prevent the enemy from gaining BDA and weapons effectiveness data. Note that this type of downplaying of 82mm recoilless effects also occurred in June 2007 when a Leopard was hit with an 82mm HEAT round during Operation SEASONS but the extent of the penetration was concealed even in written reports. I was asked at the time not to photograph the hole in the vehicle.

71. TF 3-07 DSRs (27–30 September 2007); OMLT DSR (1 October 2007).

72. PRT "Border Assessment in Spin Boldak" (21 October 2007). PRT briefing to the author (February 2008). Chamberlain interview.

73. Recce Squadron briefing to the author (Spin Boldak, 10 February 2008).

74. Discussions with Capt Carl Chevalier (Spin Boldak, 9–11 February 2008).

75. TF 3-07 DSR (28 September 2007).

76. Author's observations while attending the Spin Boldak shura (12 February 2008).

77. Recce Squadron briefing to the author (Spin Boldak, 10 February 2008).

78. TF 3-07 DSRs (24–25 September, 13–14 October and 4 December 2007); J2 DSR (7 January 2008); briefings to the author (Spin Boldak, February 2008). Interview with LCol Heather Coombs (KAF, 6 February 2008).
79. OMLT DSRs (August 2007–January 2008).
80. Telephone interview with LGen Andrew Leslie (26 October 2014).
81. Ibid.
82. PRT Briefing, "National Solidarity Programme (NSP) Community Development Councils (CDCs)" (3 November 2007).
83. Chamberlain interview.
84. Discussion with Ron Schatz (Camp Nathan Smith, 27 January 2008).
85. PRT DSR (29 September 2007); Chamberlain interview; discussions with PRT interpreters reference conspiracy theories and information ops. Maloney discussions from 2008–2010 with CF medical personnel.
86. Kai Eide, *Power Struggle Over Afghanistan: An Inside Look at What Went Wrong and What We Can Do To Repair the Damage* (New York: Sky Horse Publishing, 2012), p. 10.
87. Interview with Capt Barbara Honig (Camp Nathan Smith, 28 January 2008).
88. Interview with LCdr April Inglis (Camp Nathan Smith, 26 January 2008).
89. "PRT Assessment: Kandahar Province Judicial System" (24 December 2007).
90. Ibid.
91. Inglis interview.
92. Interview with Major Luc St Jean (Camp Nathan Smith, 28 January 2008).
93. TF 3-07 DSRs (1-2 October 2007).
94. TF 3-07 DSRs (4-6 October 2007).
95. OMLT DSR (2 October 2007).
96. OMLT DSRs (1–5 October 2007).
97. OMLT DSRs (4–6 October 2007).
98. This assessment is based on my examination of the OMLT and PRT DSRs, plus PSYREPs for the period October 2007–January 2008.
99. OMLT DSR (19 October 2007).
100. GT 3 R22eR Rapport Post-Op pour l'Op RESHTEYA ADALAAT-10 Octobre 2007" (11 October 2007).
101. Ibid.
102. OMLT DSR (11 October 2007).
103. OMLT DSR (12 October 2007).
104. 104. TF 3-07 DSR (11 October 2007).
105. 105. TF 3-07 DSR (18 October 2007).
106. TF 3-07 DSR (13 October 2007). OMLT DSR (13 October 2007).
107. JTF-A HQ J2 assessment on policing issues (24 November 2007).

108. JPCC DSR (17 October 2007).

109. That is, to what degree was there collusion between the Popalzai power structure and the Taliban to exploit the post-Naqib power vacuum…or not?

110. JTF-A HQ SIGACT List (20 October 2007); JPCC DSR (20 October 2007).

111. PRT DSR (16 October 2007); TF 3-07 DSRs (18–19 October 2007).

112. J2 DSR (24 October 2007); J2 DSR (22 October 2007).

113. J2 Commentary in JTF-A HQ DSR (23 October 2007).

114. PRT KLE with Khan Mohammad (23 October 2007).

115. Discussion with Major Mathieu Boutin (Kandahar, 5 February 2008).

116. JPCC DSR (23 October 2007).

117. JTF-A HQ "Commander's Planning Guidance – Arghandab/Lower Shah Wali Kot – Op SORR ZMARAY" (31 October 2007).

118. Ibid.

119. This section is drawn on interviews and discussions I conducted in January 2008 with BGen Guy Laroche, LCol Alain Gauthier, Major Dave Abboud, Major Eric Landry, Major Mathieu Boutin, LCol Bob Chamberlain, Karen Foss, and LTC Tom Ritz. See also my narrative of the operation in Sean M. Maloney, *War in Afghanistan: Eight Battles in the South* (Kingston: CDA Press, 2012).

120. The author was part of a discussion in the J2 shop at JTF-A HQ in January 2008 where evidence of both views was presented.

121. OMLT DSR (26 October 2007); TF 3-07 DSR (27 October 2007).

122. OMLT DSR (29 October 2007).

123. JPCC DSRs (2–3 November 2007).

124. PRT KLE: Arghandab District (1 November 2007); JPCC DSR (31 October 2007).

125. Saqib KLE (2 November 2007).

126. OMLT DSR (3 November 2007); JPCC DSR (4 November 2007). These were likely Hakim Jan's ANAP rather than ANP from outside the district.

127. JPCC DSRs (17–18 November 2007).

128. TF 3-07 DSR (17 November 2007).

129. JPCC DSRs (20 and 22 November 2007). The larger questions are 1) how this escaped observation by those at the PRT responsible for the governance portfolio in Kandahar; and 2) how this escaped the observation of those responsible for the governance portfolio in Kabul. Given the importance of Arghandab District, resources should have been applied to solidify the situation as soon as possible.

130. Interview with Capt Bruno Talbot (Camp Nathan Smith, 28 January 2008).

131. JTF-A HQ J2 assessment on policing issues (24 November 2007).

132. KLE at Camp Nathan Smith: Governor of Kandahar (2 November 2007).

133. Ibid.

134. See Talbot interview. Note that the Tribal Mapping data provided to the PRT in late 2005 lacked the depth of knowledge and definition of tribal problems like this one. It took time and experience to sift through the chaff and uncover what was going on, but with six month and nine month rotations, it was difficult for the JTF-A headquarters to grasp the situation without a dedicated White SA structure.
135. JTF-A HQ briefing "Operation SORR ZMARAY Whole of Government Planning Session" (25 November 2007).
136. Ibid.
137. JTF-A HQ briefing, "Decision Date: FOB construction" (n/d).
138. JTF-A HQ briefing "Operation SORR ZMARAY Whole of Government Planning Session" (25 November 2007).
139. OMLT DSR (1 November 2007).
140. OMLT WSRs (28 October–2 November 2007); J2 analysis and TF 3-07 DSR (3 November 2007); TF 3-06 DSR (5 November 2007).
141. TF 3-07 DSR (6 November 2007). See also TIC storyboard for that date.
142. TF 3-07 DSR (15 November 2007).
143. OMLT DSR (12 November 2007).
144. OMLT DSR (14 November 2007).
145. OMLT DSRs (17–18 November 2007); "CIE B GT 3 R22eR Rapport Post-Op pour l'Op TASHWISH MEKA- WA, 16–23 Novembre 2007" (24 November 2007).
146. Ibid.
147. "CIE B GT 3 R22eR Rapport Post-Op pour l'Op TASHWISH MEKAWA,16–23 Novembre 2007" (24 November 2007); TF 3-06 DSRs (19–20 November 2007).
148. OMLT DSR (13 December 2007).
149. Telephone interview with Col Nick Eldaoud (16 March 2012).
150. Ibid.
151. Ibid.
152. NSE briefing to the author (KAF, 19 February 2008).
153. Ibid.
154. Ibid.
155. Ibid.
156. TF 3-07 DSR (16 November 2007); IED strike storyboard.
157. TF 3-07 DSR (17 November 2007).
158. OMLT DSRs (15–21 November 2007).
159. OMLT DSR (23 November 2007).
160. 160. TF 3-06 DSRs (24–29 November 2007).
161. OMLT DSRs (22 and 24 November 2007).
162. OMLT DSR (27 November 2007).

163. OMLT DSR (29 November 2007).

164. OMLT DSR (30 November 2007).

165. OMLT DSR (5 December 2007).

166. OMLT DSR (6 December 2007).

167. PRT DSRs (8–9 November 2007).

168. PRT DSR (3 November 2007).

169. PRT DET 51 CIMIC report of KLE (17 November 2007).

170. Interview with Capt Michel "Bunny" Larocque (Camp Nathan Smith, 1 February 2008); PRT DSR (10 December 2007). See also PRT CIMIC report in the DSR (3 December 2007).

171. PRT DSRs (11–15 November and 9 December 2007).

172. PRT DSRs (15–21 November 2007).

173. PRT DSR (3 December 2007).

174. This was the consensus of Capt Michel "Bunny" Larocque, Capt Bruno Talbot, MWO Michel Pelletier, and Maj Luc St-Jean, who were all interviewed by the author in January and February 2008 in Camp Nathan Smith and in the field.

175. Pelletier interview.

176. Ibid. St Jean interview. PRT DSR (10 January 2007).

177. St-Jean interview.

178. PRT DSR (2 January 2008).

179. PRT DSR (11 November 2007) and (14 January 2008).

180. PRT DSR (12–13 January 2008).

181. RC (South) "Record of Discussions on the Kajaki Dam Project Held at KAF on 27–28 November 2007" (28 November 2007).

182. JTF-A HQ J2 assessment (3 October 2007); JPCC DSR (18 December 2007); PRT DSR (20 December 2007); JPCC DSR (26 January 2008).

183. JTF-A HQ DSRs (18 and 30 January 2007).

184. Conversation with Ron Schatz, CIDA representative (Camp Nathan Smith, 27 January 2008). My discussions with military personnel at CNS during this time detected a note of disgust with the skittish behaviour that some OGD personnel indulged in after the Mizell kidnapping. There was no danger of Canadian personnel getting kidnapped, not with a protection platoon that deployed whenever they did.

185. JPCC DSRs (29 and 31 December 2007).

186. JPCC DSRs (11–13 January 2008).

187. OMLT DSR (13 January 2008).

188. PRT DSR (7 November 2007).

189. GT 3 R22eR "Rapport Post-Op pour l'Op TEREH TOORA, 16 Décembre 2007" (16 December 2007).

190. Escadron C, RPC pour l'Op METAWARKAWAL SHEPPA, 21 Décembre 2007" (25 December 2007).

191. GT 3 R22eR “Rapport Post-Op pour l’Op KHWASHA SEMA, 23 Décembre 2007” (23 December 2007).
192. GT 3 R22eR “Rapport Post-Op pour l’Op DADA SHAY, 08 Décembre 2007” (13 December 2007).
193. Ibid.
194. Ibid.
195. Ibid.
196. Ibid.
197. Ibid.
198. Ibid.
199. OMLT DSRs (2, 8–10 January 2008).
200. GT 3 R22eR “Rapport Post-Op pour l’Op TENG AZEM, 1–17 Janvier 2008” (January 2008).
201. Ibid.
202. Ibid.
203. Ibid.
204. OMLT DSR (14 January 2008).
205. TF 3-07 DSRs (14–16 January 2008).
206. The engagement was related to the author by POC staff shortly after the event in question (I came into the POC part way through the process).
207. TF 3-07 DSR (30 January 2008).
208. Visit by the author to the MQ-9 Squadron (KAF, 18 February 2008).
209. Zybala interview.
210. Ibid.
211. Briefing to the author by ARSIC, “Afghan National Police Programmes.”
212. Confidential interview.
213. FDD briefing at JTF-A HQ (KAF, 13 February 2008).
214. The author was present at the Role 3 MMU for the MASCAL event and was involved in subsequent analysis of the attack at JTF-A HQ and RC (South).
215. The author accompanied a PRT CIMIC patrol to Dand in January 2008.
216. OMLT DSR (28 December 2007).
217. The author was present for the entirety of the Operation SOHIL LARAM II planning process and accompanied the Gurkhas into the field for the duration of the operation.

TRAPPED IN THE TI:

FEBRUARY–AUGUST 2008

The first half of 2008 marked several transitions. The Canadian government, the opposition, and the bureaucracy agreed on a new way ahead for Canada in Afghanistan with a plethora of structural changes to the mission. There was a major change at ISAF's Regional Command (South) when Canadian MGen Marc Lessard replaced British Maj.-Gen. "Jacko" Page: this change shifted the operational-level terms of reference for JTF Afghanistan. It was also time for three relief in place operations to take place simultaneously as TF 1-08, based on 2 PPCLI, relieved the 3 R22eR Battle Group; the Afghan National Army kandaks rotated; and the Focused District Development Afghan police rotation was also implemented. And, when all of that was completed, BGen Denis Thompson and his headquarters relieved BGen Guy Laroche in early April. After that, there was the seasonal transition from winter to spring, with its accompanying poppy harvest period. There were a lot of moving parts, perhaps too many. And, as with any mechanism, the likelihood of something breaking increased with the complexity of the instrument. By spring 2008, there was a widespread impression that Canada was fixed in place by both circumstances and the enemy, or as it was referred to at the time, "trapped in the TI" (tactical infrastructure). In reconstruction and development activities, there was decreasing room to manoeuvre, this to the chagrin of those in the government, opposition, bureaucracy and media who increasingly demanded measurable progress from Canada's representatives in Kandahar.

Canada's New Strategic Direction in 2008

The end date of the Canadian mission in Afghanistan was 2009. And, in the heat and light of parliamentary debate arising from a muscular opposition who wanted the mission ended, the minority government announced, on 22 June 2007, that the mission would not be extended beyond 2009 without the consent of Parliament.[1] On 12 October 2007, however, the Prime Minister announced the formation of an "Independent Panel on Canada's Future in Afghanistan."

Shortly after, the Clerk of the Privy Council Office, Kevin Lynch, called in David Mulroney and asked him to create a Secretariat for this organization. Mulroney, confusingly, also retained his leadership of the nascent interdepartmental coordination group working on Afghanistan. Mulroney selected Elissa Golberg from DFAIT to work on the Secretariat recommendation.[2]

Led by former cabinet minister John Manley, the "Manley Panel" and its product, the "Manley Report", can be seen in two ways. First, seasoned domestic political observers in Ottawa saw the whole process as "a carefully crafted document aimed at uniting Canada's badly divided Parliament"[3] and pundits called it "a master stroke that defused an explosive issue."[4] Another view was that this was all predetermined political theatre for the critics and the masses.[5]

The Panel's purpose, as stated in the Chairman's foreword, was to determine a future direction for Canada in Afghanistan that all parties in Ottawa agreed on: the government, the opposition, the bureaucracy and the media. The key line in the preamble was this: "we assumed responsibility for fighting an insurgency in a dangerous province of the country and we did so with little political debate and not much public engagement. And that insurgency is far from defeated." The Panel was, in effect, to answer the question "how do we move from a military role to a civilian one and how do we oversee a shift in responsibility for Afghanistan's security from the international community to Afghans themselves."[6]

That said, "the Panel could find no operational logic for choosing February 2009 as the end date for Canada's military mission in Kandahar, and nothing to establish February 2009 as the date by which the mission should be completed." There were several options:

1. withdraw troops in February 2009 and leave a police and army training mission behind;

2. have Canada focus solely on governance and development and have others handle the security challenges of Kandahar Province;

3. move Canadian efforts to another region of the country; and

4. withdraw completely.

The Panel agreed that "Bringing the Canadian combat mission to an end is the objective we all share, but the issue here is timing." What the Panel really meant was that they understood that Canadian international prestige and alliance credibility was on the line as much as anything. The members stated that:

> A premature military withdrawal from Afghanistan, whether full or partial, would imperil Canadian interests and values. It would diminish the effectiveness of Canadian aid in Afghanistan, by further constraining the ability of Canadian aid workers to move among

> Afghans. It could encourage insurgents. It could weaken the confidence of some Afghans living in Kandahar in their own future and in their own government, increasing their susceptibility to the Taliban insurgency. It would undermine Canada's influence in the UN and in NATO capitals, including Washington….[7]

What was unsaid in the report but understood by all was this: how could the Canadian government, the opposition and the bureaucracy extricate themselves from Afghanistan, and cause as little damage as possible to other Canadian interests? Given that those combat operations were inconveniently generating divisions in Parliament, this decision could topple a minority government that wanted desperately to stay in power.

Major recommendations were provided by the Manley report:

1. The Prime Minister needed to take the diplomatic lead and apply pressure when necessary in NATO, UN and Afghan forums to accomplish Canadian objectives;

2. More forces were necessary in Kandahar: an additional 1 000-man battle group preferably from another NATO country; medium-lift helicopters; and UAVs. The Panel recognized that Canada was too dependent on allies for these systems, which limited flexibility. And, importantly, "If no undertakings on the battle group are received from ISAF partner countries by February 2009, or if the necessary equipment is not procured, the government should give appropriate notice to Afghan and allied governments of its intention to transfer responsibility for security in Kandahar;"[8]

3. In the development sphere, Canada "should concentrate more on aid that will directly benefit the Afghan people including a "signature project identified with Canada and led by Canadians….This project assistance should be intensified alongside longer-term projects to build the capacity of Afghan communities and institutions CIDA's internal procedures should be altered as necessary to facilitate this shift in emphasis;"[9]

4. The Panel accepted that the ANDS, as mentored by SAT-A, laid out "benchmarks and timelines for Afghan government and international programming," but what was now needed were "more practical standards for judging performance and actual results." But military and developmental progress "must be tracked and assessed more thoroughly and systematically;"[10] and

5. Finally, "the Government must engage Canadians in continuous, frank and constructive dialogue about conditions in Afghanistan and the extent to which Canadian objectives are being achieved."

Note that the Manley Report did not seriously examine the basis for the insurgency in Afghanistan nor did it clearly frame the conflict in regional or global terms, nor did it connect all of this together coherently. It assumed that the driving force behind the insurgency could somehow be addressed by better organizing the mission and coordinating its constituent parts. It completely shied away from any discussion of Pakistan, "Pashtunistan," or a detailed explanation of the type of conflict that Canada was engaged in. The Panel presented the problem as an Afghan provincial problem that was partially the result of weak governance and that it could be solved if only the right amount of balanced resources were deployed and applied to Kandahar. There were serious weaknesses with that view as strategic and operational consequences revealed themselves throughout 2008.

The one real dissenting voice in the media that warned about the flaws in the Manley Report was Arthur Kent, a reporter who understood just how deadly it was to ignore Pakistan's role in the conflict:

> [T]he Harper government takes no steps whatsoever to address the real weaknesses: the misguided U.S. command and control effort; chaos and corruption in the Western-sponsored Karzai regime; and the Taliban leadership's holiday in the borderlands of Pakistan from where they coolly and efficiently plot the killing of Afghan civilians and Canadian soldiers. Debate in Ottawa over the Afghanistan mission distracts the nation with the crass, ill-informed parry and thrust of party politics at its lowest….Contributing to the confusion are Canada's leading newspapers, news agencies, and networks, who management stubbornly refuse to staff and report the Kabul regime or Pakistan sanctuary stories….As a result, Canadians hear and see the Afghanistan story mainly in the context of parliamentary debates, those confusing tangles of hyperbole that have done so much to sap understanding of country's Afghanistan mission….[11]

Two weeks after the Manley Report was released, the government made a motion in the House of Commons to enact the Panel's recommendations. On the same day, the Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan was established, followed by a Parliamentary Committee and a Privy Council Office Afghanistan Task Force to coordinate the Ottawa bureaucracy. On 13 March 2008, the House of Commons accepted the military recommendations (an additional allied battle group, acquisition of medium-lift helicopters and new UAVs), but then set a mission end date for 2011.

During this time, one of the main sticking points was getting NATO nations to commit a battle group to operate in Kandahar alongside the Canadian forces. Attempts were made at the NATO meeting in Brussels in February 2008, with no success. Between February and April, when there was a further NATO meeting in Bucharest, intense diplomatic efforts were made by Canada to gain traction on this issue in European capitals, to no avail. The Americans were watching the situation very carefully but were hesitant to commit to anything during the course of their own national election campaign, which was in progress at this time.[12] And, in any event, the Americans themselves were unclear about their objectives and were about to undergo a protracted strategic review process that would last until late 2009.[13]

While the new Cabinet Committee sorted itself out, discrete progress was made at the military and national defence levels with the Americans regarding the possible commitment of an American battalion and other resources to serve under Canadian command in Kandahar.[14] The acquisition of CH-47 helicopters and a new UAV to replace the Sperwer TUAV officially commenced. The Chief of the Land Staff, LGen Leslie, approached General George Casey, the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, on the helicopter issue. These conversations produced an agreement to supply Canada with six CH-47 Chinook helicopters from American stocks in Afghanistan until new machines could be acquired from Sikorsky.[15]

Lessard Takes Over Regional Command (South)

Another significant development was Canada's reassumption of command of ISAF's Regional Command (South) on 2 February 2008. MGen Marc Lessard relieved Maj.-Gen. "Jacko" Page and brought with him a new attitude and less tense approach. MGen Lessard believed that there had been too much national jockeying for resources and emphasized that he was a NATO commander, not a Canadian one, which was a departure from the Page approach. And, unlike van Loon who wanted seamless movement of ISAF forces from one province to another, Lessard and his staff "accepted the national provincial fiefdoms model [and was] never in our tactical shorts,"[16] according to BGen Thompson. The new Regional Command (South) believed that their role was to manage "division" level resources (reserves and enablers) and be the interface with ISAF headquarters.

ISAF headquarters finally released its plan, Operation SHAMSHIR, in mid-January 2008. SHAMSHIR supposedly replaced ARGUS RESOLVE, which was the ADZ strategy from 2006, but in reality, the new plan was a minimalist clarification more than anything. SHAMSHIR instructed subordinate commands that the district level was to be the focal point for the governance, security, and development lines of operation.

All existing security programmes, DIAG, the PTS programme, and counternarcotics, coupled with the focused district development process, were to be placed into the framework of existing ISAF operations. JPCCs were to be enhanced to become the basis of coordinated action. The mission was to "secure key areas" and "extend" Government of Afghanistan authority by building institutional capacity, and through "focused" reconstruction. Nothing cancelled out the ADZs, but then nothing in SHAMSHIR mentioned that they still existed. The language in the plan was low-key, bordering on pessimistic: one operational objective was the acquisition of an "adequate" level of security and governance in key areas to enable freedom of action. The insurgency was to be "contained," while defeating it was not even mentioned.[17] SHAMSHIR did not articulate the complex reality of how ISAF and non-ISAF organizations were to accomplish all of this at the provincial and district levels.

Photo Credit: Author

Major General Marc Lessard took command of NATO ISAF Regional Command (South) in 2008. Lessard brought a less tense and more realistic approach to Regional Command (South) operations throughout 2008.

With Operation SHAMSHIR as its overall guidance, the Regional Command (South) baseline operations plan's purpose was to "deny insurgents influence and secure key areas and routes in order to support [Government of Afghanistan]-led expansion of sub-national governance and development." Regional Command (South) planned to "weave our three Lines of Operations [Security, Governance, Development] into a comprehensive whole to

achieve unity of action with singular purpose. We will Clear, Hold, and Build when we can, where we choose. Where we cannot expand, we will disrupt, interdict, and defeat the enemy forces to keep them off balance."[18]

With a nod toward TF Kandahar's Operation GARRANDAY ZMARAY, Regional Command (South) wanted to replace ISAF forces with the ANSF and conduct "hold" and "build" operations in those areas which, in turn, would free up ISAF forces to "clear" elsewhere. Regional Command (South) saw Focused District Development as a key tool but they had no control over the process: that belonged to CSTC-A, the non-ISAF American command. Similarly, the "disrupt" forces outside the security zones were a mix of ISAF and non-ISAF, so Regional Command (South) saw that it would play a role in coordinating these operations as well. "Decapitation" operations to take out enemy leadership were to be re-examined so that better operational and strategic effects on the enemy could be generated instead of mere "tactical" death.[19]

As it affected TF Kandahar and Canadian operations in Kandahar, then, the new Regional Command (South) plan set Kandahar City, Spin Boldak and Zharey-Panjwayi as its key areas for Hold and Build operations. Highway 1, Highway 4, and the Tarinkot Road had to be secured to link Helmand, Oruzgan and Zabul to Kandahar and the airfield. The main effort for Regional Command (South) in Kandahar, in terms of application of Regional Command (South) resources as opposed to TF Kandahar resources, was Maywand District because of its role in linking Helmand and Kandahar Provinces.

In effect, Lessard and his staff now categorized forces into 1st Echelon and 2nd Echelon forces. 1st Echelon forces were the nationally-led provincial task forces like TF Kandahar in Kandahar that were "principally employed to conduct enduring operations that yield benefit over time" and "deployed in or adjacent to more densely populated areas of political and economic significance where persistent presence reassures the population and deters insurgents." 2nd Echelon forces, on the other hand, were any other forces commanded or directed by Regional Command (South) that had a disrupt function and were not necessarily involved in enduring presence.[20]

By 2008, Regional Command (South) had access to, or had to coordinate with, a number of different forces. Regional Battle Group (South), usually a British light infantry battalion; the Commander ISAF QRF, which consisted of a Portuguese light infantry company; the Theatre Task Force, also a Commander ISAF resource, based on 2nd Battalion 506th Infantry Regiment; and the 19-man TF Eagle Assault Pathfinders unit. Units from the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force and Special Operations Command Central Europe were not under Regional Command (South), but relationships of varying strengths existed between TF 32 and TF 71 on one hand and Regional Command (South) on the other. Other special operations forces operated in Kandahar Province, including

the Polish GROM (TF 49), which operated under NATO command, not Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. TF Kandahar had to be able to interact with all of these organizations as they temporarily moved through or operated in its battle space. In some cases, units or sub-units came under TF Kandahar command temporarily so the relationship between TF Kandahar and Regional Command (South) had to be solid in ways that it was not under the previous headquarters.[21]

Ultimately, more ISAF and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM resources were theoretically available than before for operations in Kandahar Province, but none of them were in the province for the long haul and not all of them were under Canadian or even ISAF command. For example, the United States committed the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (24 MEU) from April to November 2008. The continuity necessary for 1st Echelon operations was just not possible. And, just as important, Regional Command (South) did not have any control over policing: that remained an Afghan Regional Security Integration Command (South) responsibility which led back to the non-ISAF CSTC-A in Kabul. There were simply too many organizations and agencies that were not formally directed or in some cases even coordinated toward the same goal. There were multiple reporting chains regarding reconstruction and development programming, and multiple financial responsibility chains with differing criteria for funding release. Compare this to the situation as it stood in 2006 with CTF Aegis/TF Orion operating under Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, with American ETTs, police mentors, and special operations forces that all reported to Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (most of them, at least). What is important to note here was that the Lessard-led Regional Command (South) headquarters understood this "Tower of Babel," accommodated its limitations into its planning, and used personal diplomacy to make it work as best it could in the near-absence of NATO ISAF strategic direction, let alone formal unity of effort. The entire effort had an ad hoc, temporary lash-up feel to it, not that of a well-oiled machine. That said, MGen Lessard and his staff set about calming the winds of chaos as best they could. Regional Command (South) under Lessard was the first Canadian-led division in wartime since the Second World War.[22]

Regional Command (South)'s War in 2008

Canada had not had a higher-level coalition command in Afghanistan since CTF Aegis in 2006. For the most part, Regional Command (South) headquarters, led by van Loon and Page, were problematic in many ways vis-à-vis Canada's efforts in Kandahar and, as a result, the brigade-level task force headquarters in each province were akin to national fiefdoms. The Regional Command headquarters approximated a division-level headquarters of an earlier time. And, like their historical predecessors, their job was to campaign plan and set the allocation of formation-level resources to their subordinate commands (brigades),

depending on where the division commander believed the main effort should be. In Afghanistan under the Page headquarters, the brigades worked for themselves and there was a Darwinian competition for formation-level resources: aviation, intelligence and surveillance platforms, special operations forces, and so on. When MGen Lessard took over in February 2008, he and the other Canadians in the new headquarters set out to improve this state of affairs.[23]

One of the first issues was to address the state of campaign planning. According to Regional Command (South) Chief of Staff, Col Spike Hazleton, who deployed a number of months prior to the formal transfer of authority from Page to Lessard, "When we took over from Page there was no campaign plan, there was no op order…there was no coherent plan. They had plans on power point that they were going to do. There was a campaign plan in draft to which General Page did not want to sign…there was no coordinated effort or synergies going on."[24] Instructions came down from the new and incoming Commander ISAF to establish campaign plans as soon as possible.

Another problem was the Joint Operations Centre. As discussed in Volume I, this centre was a critical institution for coordinating activities between the various allied forces and maintaining situational awareness so the commander could plan and, if necessary, react effectively. This directly related to deconfliction processes and the prevention of inadvertent friendly civilian and military casualties. On arrival, LCol René Melançon, the incoming Joint Operating Centre commander, learned that the Page headquarters operated on "Fear. [The headquarters] was not getting the right information because nobody would see the [JOC commander]….people would get pissed off and then they'd get shit on. So at this point they were getting the information they wanted to hear."[25]

The Regional Command (South) Joint Operating Centre remained, as it had in previous iterations, the deconfliction organization for airstrikes, tubed artillery strikes, and missile strikes. For example, the HIMARS missile system needed to have cleared airspace because of its ballistic trajectory. It would not do to have helicopters flying into or through a missile's beaten zone.[26]

In a coalition war like Afghanistan, each country tried its best to keep control of its own "enablers." If a country lacked certain enablers, they had to borrow from others. Canada found itself in this situation, particularly when it came to intelligence platforms, helicopters and, to a lesser extent, special operations forces.[27] In effect, a barter economy emerged between troop-contributing nations, and the "Wall Street" of that barter economy was Regional Command (South). Having control of Regional Command (South) allowed, in theory, Canada to influence this barter economy to benefit operations in Kandahar. Under MGen Lessard, however, this did not take place. Lessard and his staff saw their role as re-balancing the situation from the Page headquarters, not tipping it the other way to favour TF Kandahar.[28]

Regional Command (South) brought pooled intelligence systems and helicopters to the fight. Regional Command (South) also had control of the Regional Battle Group (South), and could access the other formation-committed units like the Theatre Task Force by bartering with ISAF HQ and the other Regional Commands. What was really important, however, were the coordinating processes that Regional Command (South) were part of. These were extremely significant.[29]

First, there was the ability to accelerate rules of engagement authorizations. In all cases, nations had strict controls over dropping ordnance from their aerial vehicles, and extensive procedures, including legal ones, existed that had to be accommodated. This could and did slow down engagements. Referred to as "shortening the Kill Chain," Regional Command (South)'s process was conscientious, ethical, moral and rapid, which improved targeting and increased the success rate of the engagements. The confidence level in Regional Command (South) grew within the nations in southern Afghanistan throughout 2008. The possibility of inadvertent civilian casualties decreased.[30]

Second, there was the deconfliction of special operations forces with conventional forces. In Kandahar Province, for example, there were special operations forces that belonged to ISAF; special operations forces that did not belong to ISAF but reported to Operation ENDURING FREEDOM; special operations forces that reported to American government agencies other than the Department of Defense; and Afghan special operations forces that worked with all of the above. All of these entities were operating simultaneously in the Canadian battle space. Under Page, there was little or no coordination between most of these entities with, say, BGen Guy Laroche's headquarters, and Regional Command (South) did not seem to go out of its way to assist. MGen Lessard's staff, in this case Col Hazleton and LCol Melançon, developed rapport and then respect with the entities that controlled these various elements. An existing organization, the Kandahar Fusion Cell was re-empowered in 2008, and instructions were given from higher levels to the various special operations forces entities to deconflict with Regional Command (South). This was not always a perfect system. In one of its iterations, the leadership-hunting TF 373 had a *Team America* reputation, which was cause for concern from time to time.[31] For the most part, however, relations were superb with units like TF 71, a U.S. Special Forces task force, and TF 49, the Polish GROM, both of which worked in provincial districts where TF Kandahar had no presence.[32] According to LCol Melançon, "We didn't control them but we had a gentlemen's agreement with them because they're always playing in the sandbox."[33] Like any good formation headquarters, Regional Command (South) under Lessard "worked the seams" between its constituent units with whatever forces it could muster. An example of this was Maywand District, or the mountains between Zabul and Kandahar north of Highway 1. This proved crucial during the period where the Afghan Development Strategy was in play and the provincial-level task forces focused on the ADZ districts.

Lessard was particularly concerned about having good situational awareness on all "outlier" activities in the region:

> There was so much movement….There were the "weird Harolds" you never knew about. There was the movement of NGOs, Japanese road crews and all this. You never knew. But we started coordinating that as well. There were the Brits bringing in their own little cloak and dagger machine. The Canadians did the same thing, you knew the Dutch did the same. Everybody did their own little things. There were so many moving parts. There were the drug guys….[34]

Related to this was the overhaul and revitalization of intelligence processing at Regional Command (South) during 2008. There were essentially two organizations handling this: the Kandahar Fusion Cell and the Kandahar Intelligence Fusion Centre. The centre was part of Regional Command (South), while the cell was an American organization that was not part of NATO. The Kandahar Fusion Cell did not necessarily talk to Regional Command (South), but under the Lessard command, personal relationships led to better coordination in several important areas relating to targeting.

A crucial area where the Lessard-commanded Regional Command (South) excelled was in the kill-capture arena. The Joint Prioritized Effects List (JPEL) was not a new tool: Canadians had worked with it since at least 2006. By 2008, the JPEL was no longer an exotic mechanism. Regional Command (South) was the JPEL "broker" for Kandahar Province and allocated intelligence, surveillance and strike resources to hunt down targets on the list in the same way the 2 PPCLI Battle Group developed its "Deep Strike" system for its battle space. The kill-capture fight was superimposed on the other actions that were taking place in each province. During the course of its time, the Lessard Regional Command (South) tracked, killed or captured insurgent leaders on "an industrial scale."[35]

Regional Command (South) also had control of the Regional Battle Group (South), usually a British light infantry battalion that was rotated between the Gurkhas and the Royal Marines. The Regional Battle Group (South) was employed by MGen Lessard in the "seams" to disrupt enemy forces: Maywand, Khakrez and Zharey Districts in Kandahar Province, and in locations up in Zabul Province when required. Regional Battle Group (South) operations were usually synchronized with provincial-level task force operations to increase the effects of each operation. For example, the unit was used to sweep eastern Panjwayi District communities in Salavat and Nakhonay to relieve pressure on Dand and western-central Panjwayi District.[36]

Regional Command (South) was also responsible for coordinating medical assets. Each task force and province had a finite medical capacity, usually measured in available or unavailable "beds." For example, the Canadian-led Role 3 MMU at KAF had a particular

capacity, the British Role 2+ in Helmand had another, and so on. If the medical system as a whole was at capacity, enough medical evacuation helicopters were not available, or the weather was too bad to fly them, the Regional Command (South) commander had the ability to suspend operations, which in theory would reduce the number of incoming casualties until the situation improved. Similarly, casualties could be transferred to increase capacity in a given province, if necessary. Sometimes this entailed accessing strategic medical evacuation aircraft from one country or another, which, in turn, required command "horsepower" and influence at higher levels.[37]

Route control was another Regional Command (South) responsibility. In this case, the Highway 1 corridor and the Highway 4 corridor were main service routes for ISAF resupply and, as such, keeping them open was the focal point for a substantial amount of the Regional Command (South) effort. Without a passable and open Highway 1, the ability of the task forces in Helmand and Zabul to operate would be significantly attenuated. There was also the connection between Kabul and Kandahar that was symbolic but crucial: Highway 1 was a physical reminder that southern Afghanistan was connected to northern Afghanistan and the seat of government.[38]

Finally, there was support to the counternarcotics programme. Canadian policy and Regional Command (South) policy at this point was that poppy eradication was not supported as it was considered counterproductive to the counter-insurgency effort. However, the United States-led and sponsored counternarcotics task force did operate in the Regional Command (South) battle space and its operations had to be deconflicted with NATO operations. And there was a deal whereby "in extremis" support could be demanded if the drug task forces came into heavy contact. Again, this was a Regional Command (South) task.[39]

The revitalization of Regional Command (South) headquarters under MGen Lessard in spring of played a crucial role in maintaining the coalition position and then taking offensive action against the myriad threats throughout a very active and violent 2008. That, in turn, established a more favourable environment so that the steps taken by TF Kandahar in 2009 could flourish. If anything, the actions of an improved Regional Command (South) in 2008 was a shot across the bow of the skeptics in Washington D.C. and elsewhere who maligned NATO efforts in Afghanistan.

Laroche Recocks

With the context of the Manley Report and the new ISAF planning guidance absorbed, the Laroche-led TF Kandahar took stock of its ongoing operations. A new battle group was rotating in March, as was a whole new OMLT. With the increased demands from NATO and Canada for capacity-building and measurable progress to accompany it, TF Kandahar

put together direction for the incoming forces. Everything possible that could be done to engage all three lines of operations together would be done in the pursuit of setting the conditions for the "Afghan local and national authorities to assume complete control and maintain order." Operation GARRANDAY ZMARAY already neatly fit into this, but some command and control changes were explored. TF Kandahar believed that there should be a "transfer of authority toward OMLT-led areas of operations within the ADZ." The battle group was to move into the business of expanding the ADZ to the north. The "core" of the ADZ, Kandahar City, Dand and Daman, would be the responsibility of the PRT. The priority was to consolidate in Zharey and Panjwayi, then transfer to the ANSF. Second priority was Operation SORR ZMARAY, which would "set conditions" to expand the ADZ into northern Kandahar. TTING ZMARAY encompassed the ongoing Spin Boldak operations.

The new Joint District Coordination Centres, working with whole-of-government (the new term for "OGDs"), and the OMLT, Canadian P-OMLT and American Police Mentor Teams, were to ensure coordination at the district level with Afghan authorities.[40]

Two concepts that were already under consideration by the Laroche TF Kandahar were folded into the new approach. The first was Operation RAHAWANA ZMARAY [Constructing Lion], which is discussed in detail below and involved paving projects in Zharey and Panjwayi Districts. The second was Operation SHNA DARA [Green Valley], also known as the "Pashmul Development Bubble." The missing piece of the GARRANDAY ZMARAY plan was its lack of linkages to development and reconstruction. The idea now was to "synchronize the three lines of operations in Pashmul in order to set the conditions for development agencies to continue their operations." Operations Box AMANDA was the designated area of operation: it approximated the former MEDUSA operating area in Zharey District. TF Kandahar staff established designated "Area Security Patrol Boxes" and tossed around ideas about how to synchronise CIMIC and other resources. The next TF Kandahar under BGen Denis Thompson expanded and formalized this idea and called it a "Stability Box."[41]

Another important project that TF Kandahar kept an eye on was the Dahla Dam project. The head of aid in Kabul presented President Karzai with the Canadian technical findings on the state of the dam and the possible benefits that could be gained through its rehabilitation. This, as previously discussed, built on the existing enthusiasm generated by Asadullah Khalid and the Kandahar power structure back in early 2007. Out of this meeting, Karzai "provided clear direction to his ministers that the Arghandab 'Dahla Dam' was one of the most important national projects." As a result, TF Kandahar concluded that they would "need to keep a clear focus on the security capacity building in upper Arghandab and lower Shah Wali Kot Districts. This remains a long-term plan and much is required before the government intent translates into a fully financed project."[42]

In effect, the Laroche headquarters staff was able to dovetail what they were already engaged in with the changes that were coming down from Ottawa, Kabul and Regional Command (South). Indeed, TF Kandahar reportage changed to include significant detail on development and capacity-building. Battle group operations were de-emphasized to some extent.

Another important change in the early months of 2008 was the development of Operation RAHAWANA ZMARAY, otherwise known as the Construction Management Organization. After the issues with Operation CAUSEWAY, BGen Laroche wanted increased involvement from OGDs in development operations in the "forward" areas of Zharey and Panjwayi, particularly in paving projects, to reduce the susceptibility of resupply forces to IEDs. This involvement was not forthcoming at a whole-of-government planning session held in December 2007: "[the] battle group and various development agencies, through the PRT, do not have the same time constraints or shared assessment of the permissiveness of the environment," as a memo described the problem.[43]

An ad hoc and then a composite structure was put together to handle paving projects. Behind this project was the idea that a Canadian-managed and funded paving project led and manned by Afghans would employ some 400 fighting-age males which, in turn, would draw off "Tier 2" Taliban manpower and have spin-off economic benefits to their communities over a protracted period. The new organization was to engage the Joint District Coordination Centres and involve "legitimate" Afghan leaders. This was the sort of creative synergy demanded by counter-insurgency operations and it could solve, in theory, a multitude of problems.[44]

Like the P-OMLT, the Construction Management Organization was formed from internal resources. There were 19 engineers brought over on a six-month "technical assistance visit" from 4 Engineer Support Unit in Moncton, plus 30 attachments from the battle group, OMLT and NSE. Later on in 2008, naval plumbers, firefighters and air force airfield engineers also deployed with the Construction Management Organization. Led by Maj Geoff McCarthy, who hailed from Defence Research Establishment Suffield, the Construction Management Organization formed two teams: CMT-1 and CMT-2. CMT-1 focused its attention on Route Fosters and CMT-2 looked at Route Langley. Equipment and training issues meant that the Construction Management Organization would not deploy forward until April 2008, but the prospect of having so many positive effects potentially being produced by such a small organization was enticing to TF Kandahar, which was pressed to demonstrate measurable effects in reconstruction and development before Canada pulled out in 2009.[45]

Photo Credit: Author

This is the Route Fosters paving project from a position on Ma'Sum Ghar facing south looking over Panjwayi District. Construction Management Team-1 was able to employ 400 local people, but corruption eventually took its toll on the project.

Mention of TF Eagle Assault should be made here. In February 2008, the Americans rotated the aviation battalion stationed at KAF that was supporting Operation ENDURING FREEDOM forces. The incoming unit, 5th Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, included an OH-58D Kiowa Warrior reconnaissance helicopter unit, B Troop, 2/17th Cavalry Regiment, better known as the Banshees. Using a helicopter type similar to the Kiowa machines forsaken by Canada nearly 20 years before and replaced by the so far undeployed CH-146 Griffon,[46] the Banshees, as discussed later, developed a close relationship with TF Kandahar units throughout 2008.[47]

Photo Credit: Author

The elimination of the Kiowa Light Observation Helicopter from the order of battle in the 1990s led to a deficiency in Canadian recce capability. An informal relationship was established with B Troop, 2/17th Cavalry Regiment to assist with convoy overwatch and counter-IED tasks west of the city until Canadian Griffons could arrive.

The Nature of the Insurgency in Kandahar Province, Early to mid-2008

The insurgency in the first half of 2008 demonstrated increased sophistication in several new areas that was used to augment the capabilities of the existing geographical forces in the districts. At the same time, the enemy's inability to gain traction in Zharey and Panjwayi led to a shift in focus by June. (See Figure 3-1.)

In areas they believed to be under their control, the Taliban implemented rudimentary shadow governance measures. This initially took the form of vehicle checkpoints in Zharey, where they questioned locals, confiscated food, weapons and cell phones. Four schools were reported burned by the end of March in Zharey and girls were not permitted in the madrassas. By June, there were reports that the northern Kandahar Commission authorized Taliban leaders to settle civilian disputes in Khakrez and Shah Wali Kot. Other Taliban judges appeared in Zharey District. Finally, and importantly, Taliban leaders implemented a policy whereby "vehicles, medicines, and other materials confiscated from non-governmental organizations and the private sector belong to the public." Security, adjudication and basic necessities provided to the population by a parallel power posed a direct challenge to the Afghan government. The enemy continued their shift from negative to competitive governance throughout 2008.[48]

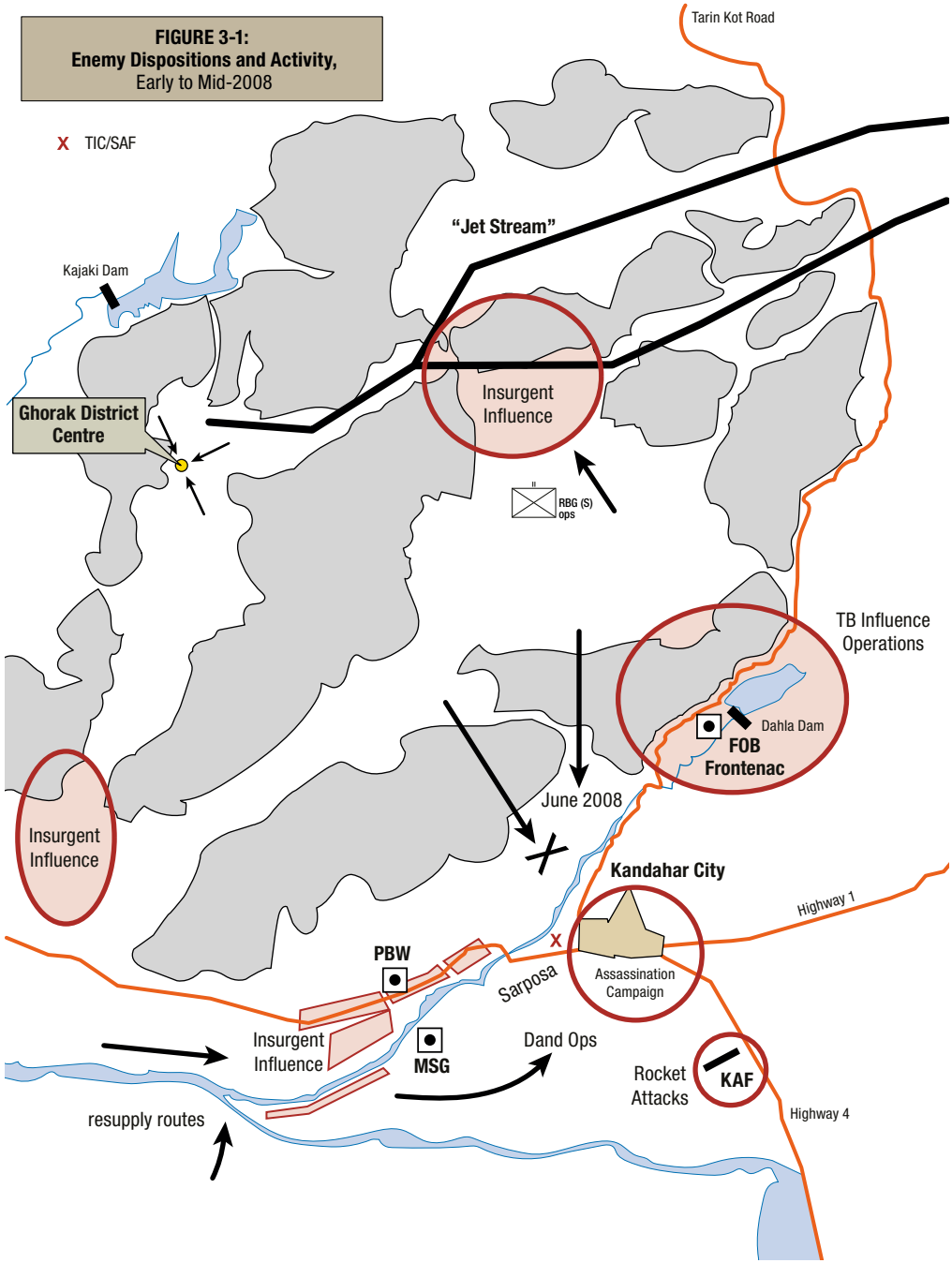


Figure 3-1: Enemy Dispositions and Activity, Early to Mid-2008

The enemy also continued to place emphasis on religious engagement. Two madrassas in Kandahar City known for extremist teachings had a selection process for potential suicide bombers who were then sent to a special madrassa in Chaman, Pakistan, for more indoctrination and training. Other "alumni" from this facility, four Pakistani citizens, two from Peshawar and two from the Punjab, were captured by security forces on their way into Kandahar City.[49]

The ever-resourceful insurgents developed countermeasures against coalition forces and these were disseminated among the various groups. In one encounter in May 2008, with Canadian troops, the enemy fired from several compounds against a night cordon and search operation. The ambush was preceded with the enemy lighting "pre-positioned bundles of sticks laced with accelerant. This instant blaze washed out the [night vision goggles] and lit the area for several minutes."[50]

By this point in the war, the enemy had detailed knowledge of ISAF rules of engagement and capitalized on those limitations. Canadians observed enemy fighters moving from safe havens, without weapons, to a cache site, where they picked up weapons, moved to an engagement position, fired, and then returned the weapons to the cache, all to avoid being targeted by armed UAVs. In another case, transiting fighters, again knowing that positive identification was not possible and thus they could not be engaged by orbiting UAVs, concealed heavy weapons in rolled-up blankets. In other cases, insurgents used children as human shields to avoid being targeted.[51]

It was evident to Canadian analysts that the insurgents:

> have become particularly fearful of ISAF air assets. If helicopters are in the area, the Taliban are resigned to the fact that they are severely restricted in their ability to move around. When helicopters are heard or seen, the Taliban will hide rather than be caught trying to conduct an attack….The Taliban in Zharey and Panjwayi are also afraid of UAVs. They identify the presence of a UAV by the sound of its engine. They…will take evasive action.[52]

The creation of the Joint District Coordination Centres and their reporting phone lines seriously disturbed the insurgents in Kandahar Province. Centrally directed by the Quetta Shura, insurgent groups in Kandahar attacked cell phone infrastructure starting in February 2008. The insurgents then approached the Afghan cell phone companies and told them if they did not turn off phone service at night, they would continue to destroy cell towers. The enemy shifted to another form of communication at night when the towers were off.[53] Again, this was a serious challenge to the Afghan government and the Canadian forces in Kandahar. Though recognized as a problem by this and subsequent TF Kandahar

Photo Credit: Author

The enemy's interdiction of the Afghan cell phone system undermined security efforts in Panjwayi and Zharey Districts. Plans were made to move the service equipment into more secure locations like Three Tank Hill, seen here behind a combined Afghan–Canadian OMLT patrol.

headquarters, nothing effective or concrete was done about it for some time as the problem became normalized over rotations. It was unclear if it was a CIDA problem, a DFAIT problem, or a military problem.

ISAF's insatiable need for fuel and the decision to land and transport material from the port of Karachi in Pakistan to Kandahar led NATO countries into the morass that was the Pakistani trucking business. Forgetting that it was the Pakistani trucking "mafias" and Quetta business interests that created and supported the Taliban in 1994 to clear the Highway 4–Highway 1 trade route, NATO ISAF became increasingly dependent on the same institutions in an environment that it could not influence but the enemy could. To complicate things further, the Pakistani Army controlled the Port of Karachi and a trucking company through a commercial entity called the National Logistics Cell. There was also an ongoing dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan over the 1965 Afghanistan Transit Trade Agreement and its proposed successor, the Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Agreement.[54] It was not clear to Canadians in Kandahar how it all functioned, just that a huge amount of money was on the line, most of it coming from Western countries, and a variety of interests wanted their cut. As one who was involved in this resupply effort explained:

> Karachi is the Sea Port of Debarkation for Operation ENDURING FREEDOM….[The main supply route] up from Karachi is 759 klicks, 472 miles of bad road, shakedown, extortion, break down and delay. The drivers get jacked around at Pakistani Customs, the Pakistani version of the Teamsters, the trucking company they contracted with, and all the various trolls setting up roadblocks for the collection of protection money, and then they sit in the parking lot at Chaman waiting to cross over to Spin Boldak. Things go boom in the night in that parking lot….[55]

By August 2008, fuel convoy attacks were epidemic with British forces in Helmand on the verge of running out of fuel. On one occasion, four "jingle trucks" with fuel disappeared into central Zharey District after being diverted. Canadian observers believed that there was a convergence of interests, possibly tribal in some cases, between the "truck mafias" and the Taliban.[56] These problems continued throughout 2008 to varying degrees.

Overall, however, the enemy leadership did not see itself as achieving success in the districts. They had seriously challenged Canadian freedom of movement in western Panjwayi and were capitalizing on the disorder in Senjaray, but they were thrown back again in Arghandab. By June, Mullah Omar sent his brother-in-law to meet personally with Kandahar insurgent commanders. The situation was not good, he said, and the Quetta Shura "have decided to take the fight to Kandahar City as they are unable to successfully fight coalition forces in the rural areas." In effect, the insurgent leadership believed that the Canadians would not fight in the city in order to avoid collateral damage. Zharey and Panjwayi retained organizations to keep the pot stirred, but they wanted the focus to shift to the city as soon as possible. In order to assist with this shift, Al Qaeda's senior advisor to the Taliban sent two of his men in to coordinate a high-profile urban terrorist campaign.[57]

Counter-IED Operations

Counter-IED operations continued to expand and evolve under the Laroche headquarters, where the counter-IED component and its constituent organizations were now called C-IED Squadron.[58] The mounting number of human and vehicle casualties, however, produced substantial pressure in Ottawa to develop new approaches. In essence, the constant drip of tactical IED attacks was having a strategic effect on a casualty-conscious minority government via the media and the opposition.

One of these responses was the acquisition of the Enhanced Route Opening Capability or EROC, which was the same thing as the American Route Clearance Package. The EROC consisted of three vehicles: the Husky detector vehicle and its trailer, the Buffalo removal vehicle with remotely controlled arm, and an RG-31-like vehicle with a robot. The EROC, of which four groups of three vehicles were deployed by summer 2007, were not part of C-IED Squadron; they belonged to the deployed combat engineer squadron

commanded by the battle group. As in the past with the American route clearance package, the EROC led each vehicle column down the roads in contested territory like Zharey and Panjwayi. Finally, Canada was no longer dependent on this scarce American capability.[59]

Then there were electronic countermeasures. As discussed in Volume I, the teething troubles of deploying a Canadian electronic countermeasures capability were somewhat alleviated by 2007. Almost every vehicle was now equipped with electronic countermeasures systems and a man-pack electronic countermeasures system now accompanied dismounted patrols. Electronic countermeasures were the realm of the Signals community, not C-IED Squadron, as it was crucial to deconflict jamming frequencies from communications frequencies. This took some time and effort.

C-IED Squadron, meanwhile, looked at methodologies and intelligence connectivity. The debate revolved around who targeted whom. Did the existing forces and their intelligence capabilities go after IED makers as a matter of course as they went about operations, or should specialized organizations be formed to specifically target the IED chain? With the trend toward "strategic" (that is, political and information operations) issues, the Canadian system leaned toward specialized targeting in late 2007, and particularly early 2008. That meant that C-IED Squadron had to evolve to meet that demand.

Conceptually, C-IED Squadron understood that there were specialized IED cells and, for want of a better term, "multidisciplinary" cells: insurgent units that did everything, including laying IEDs and mines. Using a Canadian analogy, there were Manufacturers, Engineers and Pioneers. "Bomb Knowledge" decreased as one moved from left to right in that Pioneers merely laid harassment devices and did not know how they were made, while Engineers knew how the weapons fit into more sophisticated defensive planning. There were also Facilitators, who were essentially logisticians.

Mitigation techniques like electronic countermeasures, EROC, and dismounted searches could address some of the effects of IED attacks. Targeting Pioneers with nighttime airstrikes was another. These were only tactical and responsive in nature, however. How did TF Kandahar shut down the whole chain? Should the Facilitator or the Manufacturer be targeted? And with what? Special operations forces? Conventional forces? Armed UAVs? Finally, how did one find those people and their factories? How did TF Kandahar synchronize this with the actions of other forces in the province?

The first move was to deepen the analysis. For that, detailed knowledge of who was who and how they were linked together was crucial, as was linking a particular bomb maker to a given bomb or attack. This sort of link analysis was not new in 2007 and had been ongoing for several years, but there were problems focusing it. Level I analysis was what the Tactical Exploitation Team did at a blast site. Level II was the "CSI"-like forensics analysis done at the American laboratory at Bagram Airfield: DNA from the bomber, device

comparison to known bomb makers and their "signatures." Level III was connecting this biometric and technique data to cells and personalities. This was usually conducted in the United States by specialized agencies. The problem was that Canada could conduct Level I and II operations in Afghanistan, but the data from Level III were not coming back down to in-theatre Canadian forces in a form that could be meaningfully employed.[60] Ultimately this led to the creation of a Canadian Level III capability, which was leveraged to access American Level III data because Canada had something to contribute. And a specialized position in the ASIC was later added to handle C-IED operations.

What did this mean? C-IED Squadron could determine who built a given device and the likely area where those builders were located. That allowed deployed units to adapt their tactics, techniques and procedures in their given area of operation to offset the capabilities of the IEDs employed by the enemy in that area. It also fed the Canadian and coalition targeting systems so that IED makers could be subjected to special operations forces strikes or UAV strikes if they popped up in ISTAR reportage. It leveraged Canadian data for allied data. Ultimately, it saved Canadian and Afghan lives.

For example, the media exposed the fact that vehicles were equipped with electronic countermeasures systems.[61] Up to that point, the enemy were repeatedly frustrated because their remote controlled IEDs (RCIEDs) were not working.[62] In another part of Afghanistan, allied counter-IED exploitation teams discovered that there were lengths of command wire from the blast sites leading to nowhere. This was recorded and disseminated. The lengths of wire found at several sites over time were found to be longer and longer. Analysis determined that the enemy employed a receiver attached to the wire, which was attached to the explosive. They were testing the size of the invisible electronic countermeasures "bubble" around the vehicle and modifying the wire so they could send the command to the bomb. This was called a "spider device." Some of these devices were later found to be factory-built in Iran, who had also acquired American electronic countermeasures systems in Afghanistan from the Taliban and technically exploited them.[63]

One approach to spider and similar devices was the "ECM Burn." The idea was to sweep suspected routes from the air using U.S. Navy EA-6B Prowler electronic warfare aircraft. Systems onboard swept through the frequency spectrum as the plane traversed the route to detonate emplaced devices. The obvious problem with this approach was the unintended consequences if a device detonated near civilians on the road or, say, in a factory in a built-up area. ECM burns could only be used in certain areas and had to be carefully coordinated.[64]

When the nature of the threat was disseminated to the forces in the field, techniques were established to counter spider devices. When the enemy observed and analyzed these counter measures, they responded by building "command-pull" devices that did not rely on

electronics. This, in turn, led to another round of technique-based countermeasures. When the enemy observed that there were morning dismounted patrols along routes looking for command wires, they laid anti-personnel mines near the ambush site, and so on.

During the second half of 2007 and early 2008, the enemy assessed the capabilities of the EROC systems and modified their behaviour accordingly. Within weeks of the first EROC deployment, C-IED Squadron observed that the enemy were removing explosive material from mines and unexploded ordnance, and packing it into plastic water jugs in order to reduce the metal signature of the devices. Another new method was to dig holes in the roads and fill them with a powdered aluminum explosive. Again, the Husky vehicle was incapable of detecting such a device. Aware of the electronic countermeasures capabilities already, insurgent manufacturers produced more and more pressure-plate IEDs. They shifted what radio-controlled IEDs they still had to areas where the ANSF were operating as the Afghan army and police had no electronic countermeasures capability. Whether due to personnel losses, local greed or an increasing desire to implicate local people, more and more emplacers were non-ideological hired hands, paid for a one-off action.[65] Knowledge that Canada was employing specialist counter-IED people led to the deployment of anti-handling devices on IEDs and secondary devices by early 2009, making the EOD job all the more difficult.[66]

IEDs became larger and larger in an attempt to catastrophically destroy armoured vehicles. As a result, more and more of the Telerob explosive ordnance disposal and observation robots, nicknamed "Johnny 5," were getting "killed" during disarming attempts. It was the never-ending vigilance by C-IED Squadron that significantly reduced the enemy's ability to generate larger numbers of casualties.

Relief in Place, February–March 2008

There were more simultaneous moving parts during this rotation than in any of the previous rotations. The battle group relief in place was relatively straightforward. TF 1-08 was based on 2 PPCLI and led by LCol David Corbould. 2 PPCLI Battle Group was structured the same way that Alain Gauthier's battle group was, with two infantry companies of four platoons instead of three infantry companies. In this case, B Company was under the command of Maj Mike Lane, with C Company under the command of Maj Stacey Grubb. Maj Trevor Gosselin handed over the Leopard tank squadron to B Squadron, led by Maj Chris Adams. Maj Jamie Vieveen was in command of the incoming artillery battery, B Battery 1 RCHA, while 12 Field Squadron commanded by Maj Nathan Packer took over combat engineering tasks. Recce Squadron came from D Squadron, 12 RBC, and was led by Maj Stéphane Boivin.

LCol Corbould realized, once on the ground, that the situation was dire. TF Kandahar had built a lot of "tactical infrastructure" in Zharey and Panjwayi Districts, but there was a serious manning problem. There were two four-platoon infantry companies. One company was in Shah Wali Kot patrolling, while the other had to occupy the police sub-stations and combat outposts along Route Fosters West. For a platoon-sized base, at least one section had to be left behind to protect it while the other patrolled. For a section-sized position, no patrolling was possible. The P-OMLT was holding some positions on their own with teams of five to seven soldiers. The battle group had no reserve other than the tank squadron, which could not operate on its own given the combined-arms requirements of the environment.

The OMLT's situation was different. The incoming OMLT, based around 3 PPCLI and heavily augmented, had to adjust to the command and control changes underway at TF Kandahar. LCol Dan Drew had to relinquish command of the OMLT to Col François Riffou, in part to reflect greater emphasis on brigade-level mentoring and the expansion of the OMLT across the whole of 1-205 Brigade of the Afghan National Army.

The concept of "TF Zharey," whereby the OMLT became a battle group-like "landowner" for that district alongside an associated kandak and the Joint District Coordination Centre and Afghan police, achieved greater definition between the time 3 PPCLI started training for the OMLT role and their deployment to Afghanistan. The political requirement to maintain a Canadian infantry company at FOB Frontenac meant that someone else had to handle command and control in Zharey.[67] In essence, the need to coordinate Afghan police, P-OMLT, Afghan National Army and OMLT operations led to something akin to an augmented Joint District Coordination Centre, which then evolved in March–April 2008. The OMLT established TF Zharey and a command post was constructed in the OMLT buildings at TF Kandahar. This also meant obtaining unscheduled and unprogrammed signals support so that TF Zharey could communicate with both the Afghan National Army systems and the Canadian systems.[68] (See Figure 3-2.)

This state of affairs called into question what the OML's purpose was: was it to mentor the Afghans or hold ground? And to whom did it report? Technically, the OMLT was cut by Canada to NATO ISAF and Regional Command (South). But was it operational command, or operational control? TF Kandahar behaved as if it was under its command and included the OMLT in its planning and operations orders. This ran counter to the OMLT's work up training and led to two camps within the OMLT. Col Riffou resolved this situation by accepting the TF Kandahar view. The OMLT became a battle space coordination entity in addition to its other tasks, and the kandaks, to some extent, were treated as manoeuvre units within TF Kandahar, though with reference to 1-205 Brigade and General Bashir, to whom Col Riffou was the go-between.[69]

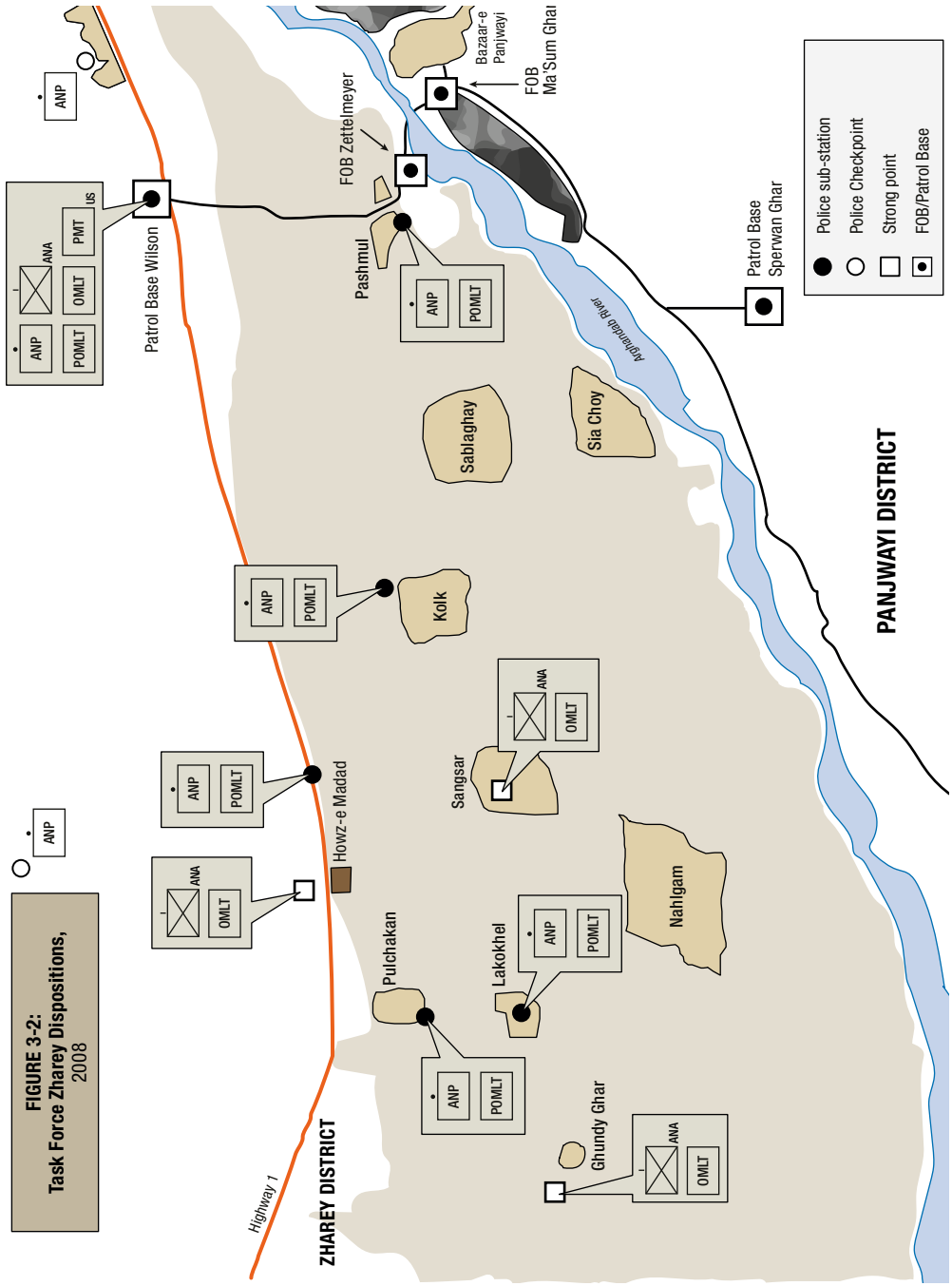


Figure 3-2: Task Force Zharey Dispositions, 2008

By mid-March 2008, 1st Kandak and its mentors were operating in Panjwayi District, while 2nd Kandak and its mentors occupied positions in Zharey District. 3rd Kandak deployed some mentored elements to FOB Nevermind in Ghorak. The concept of a "TF Panjwayi" was not pursued yet, but BGen Laroche's intent was still to move the entire battle group to FOB Frontenac in Shah Wali Kot.

The P-OMLT continued with its close mentoring of the police in Zharey and Panjwayi. During the Canadian relief in place, however, the American-led Afghan Regional Security Integration Command (South) and the Afghan Ministry of the Interior scheduled a Focused District Development process for the police in Zharey and in Panjwayi. Overnight, the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) arrived, and the district police were put on buses and sent to the Regional Training Center in Herat for drug screening and retraining. One fifth failed the drug testing and were released. On the downside, there were not enough ANCOP to backfill the Zharey police, so the P-OMLT was stretched to the limit and the patrolling tempo dropped. It dropped even further when the ANCOP declared they had not been paid in four months and threatened to walk off the job.[70]

Some new capabilities came online during this rotation. The first was the Boeing ScanEagle UAV, called the SUAV to distinguish it from the Sperwer TUAV. ScanEagle was smaller than the TUAV, quieter, and carried a colour camera. Maj Gilbert McCauley, a helicopter pilot, was put in charge of fusing the TUAV troops, who were artillery, with air force crews that were now being integrated with UAV operations because of higher-level Canadian changes demanded by legal circumstances. Only trained pilots were permitted to fly UAVs. As a result, the Air Command and Royal Canadian Artillery flags now flew over the expanded UAV launch site at KAF. ScanEagle provided the Canadian contingent with a dramatic leap in situational awareness on the battlefield in 2008.[71]

With more sensors available, more flat screen TVs were required in the Provincial Operations Centre and the Tactical Operations Centre, which meant an increase in Signals capacity to move the data throughout the headquarters. In addition, the increase in DFAIT and CIDA activities meant that their information systems had to be accommodated as well. Similarly, there were several temporary or even ad hoc systems in play at the battle group and elsewhere, which complicated command and control at the TF Kandahar level. Further complications were encountered with the expanded OMLT in that Afghan forces used different radios and had no data capacity. As a result, a complete reorganization of Canadian information and communications systems was conducted in 2008 and a Signals Squadron was established to handle it.[72]

Photo Credit: Author

The Boeing Insitu ScanEagle unmanned aerial vehicle arrived in 2009. Smaller than the Sperwer TUAV and with greater endurance and sensor capabilities, the ScanEagle was a significant contributor to battlefield surveillance west of Kandahar City.

Another change was a reorganization of artillery assets. The HALO acoustic detection system was expanded with more sensor posts and more Light Counter Mortar Radar systems were deployed, including one to Strong Point Mushan. Data from these systems and the UAVs were fused by the Fire Support Coordination Centre and fed to B Battery's M-777 gun detachments as they moved between Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar, Patrol Base Wilson, the forward operating base near Hutal or any of the temporary gun positions (see Figure 3-3). B Battery also brought the new GPS-guided Excalibur high-explosive and fragmentation rounds with them for the M-777 guns for precision engagement.[73]

This relief in place itself went faster and was more efficient than the previous one, with 2 PPCLI Battle Group assuming tactical control of operations in Panjwayi District on 16 March 2008. LCol Corbould deployed B Company to Panjwayi, and C Company to FOB Frontenac in lower Shah Wali Kot. Maj Grubb wasted no time and attended the shura at Shah Wali Kot with a CIMIC team from the PRT to gain situational awareness, while Maj Lane established his headquarters at Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar, and deployed his platoons to the PSSs Talukan and Zangabad, and Strong Point Mushan along Route Fosters.[74]

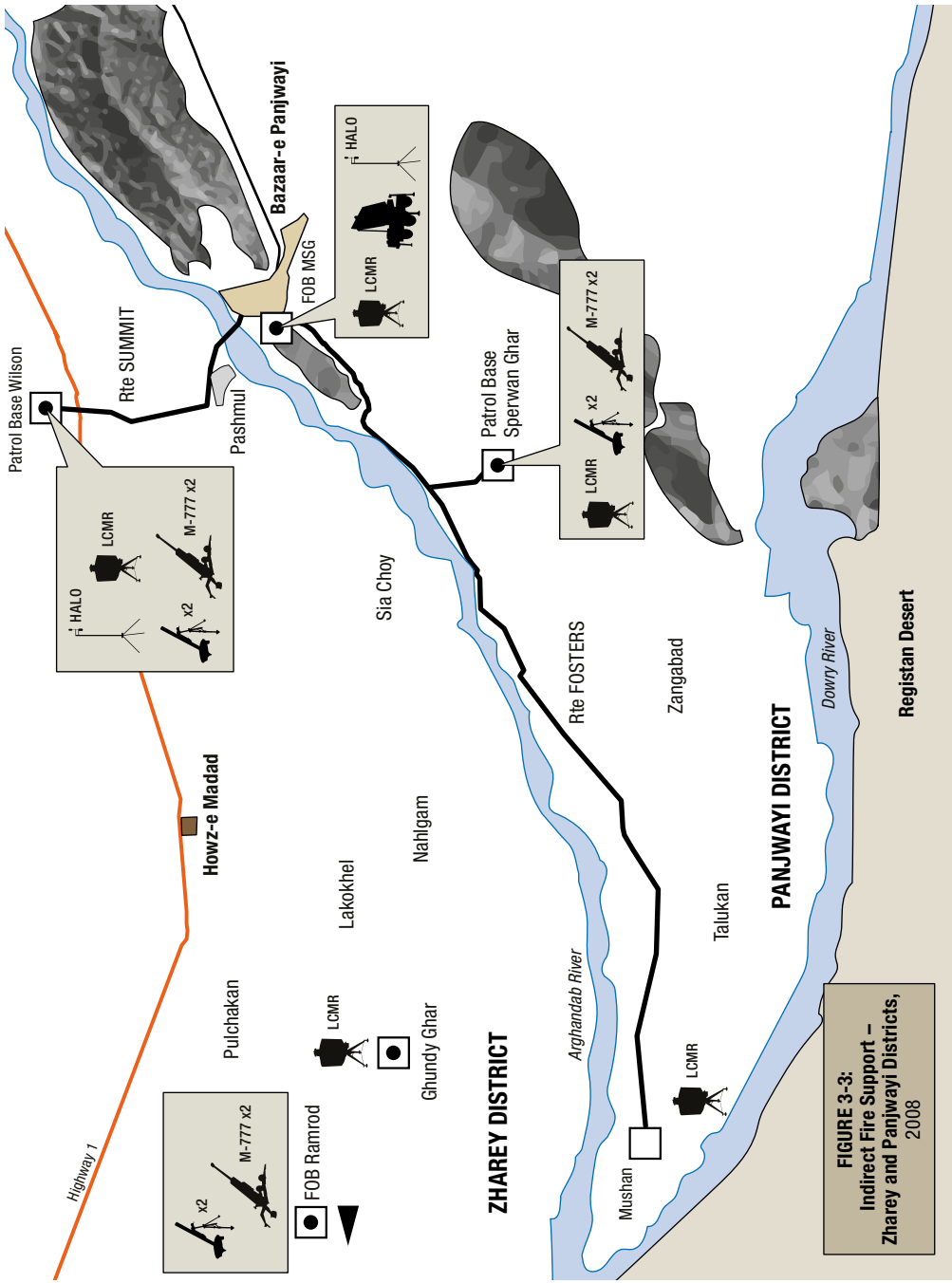


FIGURE 3-3: Indirect Fire Support – Zharey and Panjwayi Districts, 2008

Figure 3-3: Indirect Fire Support – Zharey and Panjwayi Districts, 2008

While the relief in place was in progress, however, Sgt Jason Boyes from B Company was tragically killed by an IED during a dismounted familiarization patrol near Zangabad.[75]

As part of the relief in place, the tank squadron had to undertake Operation RIP MUSHAN to get the new Afghan National Army company and its Canadian mentors rotated into the remote facility. The IED threat on Route Fosters was such that C Squadron resorted to trickery, deceit and every possible deception method it could employ to conceal their real objectives and directions of travel whenever they deployed the 70-tonne vehicles outside the gates of FOB Ma'Sum Ghar. Now that Strong Point Mushan was online, it had to be resupplied. So did the police sub-stations along Fosters at Talukan, Zangabad and Haji. As there were no Canadian helicopters, resupply had to go in by ground. The enemy knew this. OMLT and P-OMLT teams received indications that the enemy were having problems deploying a "watermelon" in front of a tank convoy because of the disruption caused by constant UAV flights over the area of operations.[76]

The resupply force escorted by C Squadron ran into serious trouble on 2 March. After sweeping south from Highway 1 and entering the Arghandab riverbed west of Mushan, a Leopard C2 with a roller hit and detonated an explosive device. As a Leopard 2A6M was manoeuvring, it also struck an explosive device, disabling it. A Leopard C2 equipped with a plough then detonated two or possibly three more devices, killing the driver, Trooper Mike Hayakaze. With five mine strikes, two mobility kills and one death, Maj Gosselin established three defensive leaguers in the riverbed for the night until engineers with an EROC could make their way to the area and clear it so that the stricken vehicles could be recovered. UAVs orbited all night, waiting for the enemy to attack. ISTAR reportage indicated that the insurgents had "eyes on" but lacked enough RPG rounds to take on the leaguers, and this frustrated them to a great extent. Knowing that the ISTAR systems were monitoring them, one insurgent commander exclaimed into his radio that "ISAF, you are too brave and you must be put in your place." Maj Gosselin recovered his vehicles, delivered the supplies and personnel to Strong Point Mushan, and returned to FOB Ma'Sum Ghar via Highway 1 and the Dori riverbed without further incident. The next day, Gosselin handed the torch over to Maj Chris Adams and B Squadron.[77]

As it stood in mid-March 2008, Canadian troops were arrayed in several districts but with distinct mandates that did not necessarily overlap. The battle group infantry companies were in Shah Wali Kot and Panjwayi, while Recce Squadron was in Spin Boldak. The OMLT was in Ghorak, Zharey and Panjwayi, while the P-OMLT was mostly in Zharey. PRT CIMIC was in Arghandab, Dand, Zharey and Panjwayi. The new Construction Management Organization teams were scheduled to go into Zharey and Panjwayi. There were Joint District Coordination Centres in Spin Boldak, Zharey and Panjwayi, but none in Shah Wali Kot, Arghandab or Ghorak. Though he was moving toward increased

integration of the wide variety of forces at hand, the end state desired by BGen Laroche was not in sight toward the end of his tour, which produced a level of incoherence that his successor, BGen Thompson, sought to correct when he arrived to take command in early May. TF Kandahar forces had to ride out that incoherence in March and April, fighting on several seemingly disconnected fronts alongside a somewhat bewildered Afghan ally, sporadically reinforced by a plethora of NATO allies that moved in and out of the province, and not backed up with coordinated reconstruction and development projects as required.

The Ghorak Distraction, March 2008

Upper Ghorak District remained a festering boil well into March 2008. A 50-man "lost command" from Weapons Company, 1st Kandak, and a Canadian OMLT of five Canadians, led by Capt Slade Lerch, were ensconced in the hot and remote FOB Nevermind, the Ghorak District centre. The Canadian team goaded the Afghans, when they could, to conduct vehicle checkpoints at the Ghorak Pass and attempted to get them to patrol more than 5 kilometres away from the forward operating base. Morale was low. On 6 March, for example, only six Afghans were willing to patrol. The others demanded fuel and water before they would go out. An aerial resupply was botched and only half of the needed supplies arrived. The company then threatened to go absent without leave back to Kandahar by their own means. The Canadian mentors determined that half of the company was actually in the "red" rotation, that is, supposed to be on leave. With no enemy activity in the area, the decision was eventually made to replace Weapons Company with Afghan police (Operation TEEZ SPAAR). Led by a troop from Recce Squadron and Canadian engineers in an EROC suite, the police made their way in and the men of 71C redeployed with Weapons Company to KAF on 19–20 March.[78] On the way out, an orbiting MQ-9 Reaper spotted a sports utility vehicle with armed personnel signaling to other insurgents. The Reaper tracked this vehicle to a rendezvous with two others loaded with insurgents. A 500-pound bomb took out the target, killing 12 enemy: "Immediately following the strike numerous local nationals flooded the scene and quickly removed the bodies."[79] When the extraction force halted for the night, an MQ-1 Predator spotted an IED "dig team" on the extraction route. An A-10 came on scene to strafe but the enemy escaped.[80]

Spin Boldak: Return of the "Lost Command," March–April 2008

TF Kandahar's other "lost command" was in Spin Boldak. Maj Stéphane Boivin took over from Maj Pete Huet in late February. Equipped with two troops of eight Coyote surveillance vehicles, and supported with small engineer and artillery detachments, Boivin and his men continued with the effort to define what was happening in the district. The overall Spin Boldak status quo revolved around Coyote patrols along the border

observation post lines that radiated like wings northeast and southwest from the Spin Boldak border crossing point; key leader engagements with the exasperated district leader; attempts to mediate the unending Noorzai-Achakzai feud; PRT CIMIC observation of the usual Spin Boldak District development assembly corruption; and repeated attempts by suicide bombers to kill Col. Abdul Raziq. D Squadron also provided a QRF for incidents, and supported the American Afghan Border Police embedded training team that took up residence with the DynCorp police mentors. From time to time, TF 49, the Polish special operations forces operating in Maruf, made an appearance to rewater and resupply.[81]

At this point in the war, Spin Boldak acted as a primary line of communication for Taliban forces operating west of Kandahar City. With 5 000 people moving through the border on Highway 4 per day, the ability to intercept small numbers of unarmed infiltrating fighters was minimal. Similarly, as a main border town, every form of criminal activity conceivable was present and, in many cases, there was considerable overlap in every direction. Development and governance in Spin Boldak was hampered by a revolving door of district leaders. There was only a small World Food Programme detachment, periodic visits by a DFAIT representative from the PRT, and a single CIMIC officer attached to the squadron from the PRT. It was very much an economy of effort mission. Boivin and his men learned that the leaders running the Spin Boldak reconstruction shura were not even living there: they lived in Chaman. When Boivin managed to have the money shut off to the problematic reconstruction shura, Governor Asadullah Khalid intervened and brought the Chaman-based elders back into the process. It seemed as if Col. Raziq's provision of alms consisting of one-third of his illicit earnings to the population had greater impact than the district leader and the development assembly on the welfare of the community.[82]

Ongoing manoeuvre-to-collect operations by Recce Squadron re-confirmed that the Lowy Kariz area was a significant part of the enemy's logistics chain that went from Chaman in Pakistan, to Spin Boldak, into Arghistan, and then into Kandahar City. Again, Arghistan was known to have historical links to the original Taliban groups that seized Kandahar City back in the 1990s. Recce Squadron patrols and engagement in the Lowy Kariz area had a measurable impact on enemy movements through the area.

However, when Col. Raziq mounted counternarcotics operations to demonstrate to the coalition forces that he was "serious" about such matters, there was push-back. Narcotics producers in Pakistan staked the poppy growers in the area and when Raziq cleaned up the fields, those growers owed substantial sums of money that could not be recouped. Shadowy men arrived at night with mines and IEDs, and explained that their debts could be worked off if they laid them to interfere with coalition force activities. The growers benefited from the additional security of the coalition troops staying away from IED'd areas and were able to reduce their debt load. As a result, there was a spate of IED strikes.[83]

The real bellwether was a bombing on Highway 4 on 15 April. Four Afghan police were bypassing a construction site when they spotted a suspicious vehicle, which turned out to be a suicide car bomb. The bomber detonated the vehicle, wounding the Afghan police. Two days later, a D Squadron Coyote hit an IED, wounding the driver, who was evacuated to the Role 3 Hospital in KAF. When the IED exploitation team arrived, they were treated to the detonation of a secondary device. Fortunately, nobody was wounded or killed.[84]

Neighbouring Shorabak District was threatened in March 2008 when 150 insurgents and eight vehicles crossed at a remote location to get around the observation post chain. Without any forces in the area, little could be done. Col. Raziq did send a QRF but the enemy dispersed into the Reg Desert. At the same time, a firefight broke out between Afghan border police and Pakistani forces, which resulted in high-level involvement to reduce tensions. One Afghan cop was killed and two wounded. It was possible that this was a distraction so that the Shorabak insurgents could infiltrate, but it is equally possible that other less malevolent reasons were the cause.[85]

The insurgents upped the ante on 22 April by assaulting two Afghan border observation posts with 50 fighters operating from the Pakistan side of the Durand Line. The Afghan Border Police put up a furious fight, resulting in six dead, two wounded and two missing. A border police patrol, responding to the attacks, hit an IED, wounding two more. A TF 49 patrol was in the area and responded. A Polish joint terminal air controller was able to raise a B-1B bomber to provide support and joint direct attack munitions (JDAM) bombs took out around ten insurgents and the others retreated. D Squadron assisted with evacuating the wounded. The next day, Maj Boivin, who was attending a shura, was nearly killed when a suicide bomber approached the shura and detonated himself. Things were heating up in Spin Boldak, but nobody was sure exactly why or what changed since 2007.[86]

Operation AGILE SCORPION, mounted on 27–30 April, surged D Squadron patrols out into the communities of Lowy Kariz. After a number of key leadership engagements, Maj Boivin and his men were able to determine that a new group of insurgents in the area, along with fresh leadership, were intimidating the local population and then running to the hills when any patrols came near. "Unfortunately," D Squadron reported, "our ability to directly influence this area remains limited."[87]

As a sidebar, Recce Squadron patrols discovered a community of 30 people in a remote area of the district. This community was not on any map. When approached, the patrol was told to go away, that they were Barakzais from Pakistan, and that they wanted to get away from all of the violence. It was not clear how many decades they had been there as there was evidence of inbreeding. The horrible living conditions were such that contact with this community had a marked psychological impact on some of the Canadian soldiers. It was as if these Barakzais were the descendants of a several-hundred-year-old Diaspora.[88]

Shah Wali Kot and Arghandab, February–March 2008

C Company, led by Maj Stacey Grubb, established themselves at FOB Frontenac in February before the main body of 2 PPCLI Battle Group arrived. At this point, they were under the command of 3erR22eR Battle Group but received no guidance. "I'd studied enough COIN [and] I put together my own guidance. This was after 24 hours on the ground. I said, 'This is what we're going to do,' to my guys. 'Here's my intent.' And it was all about not being tied to infrastructure; it was about getting out into the population, getting to know our neighbours first."[89] Grubb, however, was confronted with the huge size of FOB Frontenac. It was designed to house a whole battle group, but there was only C Company and its attachments, which included a MEWT. The enemy were perplexed at FOB Frontenac: "They couldn't understand when we first got there what the heck we were doing….They could not understand why we'd built this massive thing there… [FOB Frontenac] wasn't linked to anything." C Company used it as a refit facility between patrols: "We only stayed there long enough to get ready for the next patrol." Grubb established four patrol boxes in the lower Shah Wali Kot–upper Arghandab District area. Each of the four platoons patrolled on a 72-hour basis and soldiers "lived off of their backs." If enough information came in on a target, Grubb would launch the company for a 96-hour operation.[90] (See Figure 3-4.)

The patrols gathered significant information but they needed better means to connect with the population. Relations with the police were minimal: the Kandak Amniante Uruzgan (KAU) patrol force on the Tarinkot Road worked for a power broker in Oruzgan and with the American special forces. There was no Afghan National Army presence. In time, a CIMIC team arrived, and Grubb was able to make contact with the district centres in Shah Wali Kot and Arghandab. When that connection was made, "the district centres gave a lot of stuff…we gave them CB radios so they could talk to us. The CIVPOL put in a 911-like number for the cell phones. We got tons of int from the district centres. And our patrols would corroborate some of that intelligence."[91]

At this time, American forces, in this case TF 32, were operating with the KAU security forces on the Tarinkot Road, and in an arc from upper Shah Wali Kot and into northern Khakrez District, where they engaged in disrupt activities. In one encounter, they lost an RG-31 in a remote area and needed recovery. 2 PPCLI Battle Group launched Operation SHAMSHIR TEZ [Sharp Sword] to assist. An engineer route clearance package, a Leopard tank troop from B Squadron, an AEV and an infantry platoon from C Company made their way through the tough terrain in the Gumbad region to link up with TF 32. Predator coverage identified possible IED locations, and these were cleared with dismounted vital point searches. It was exhausting work, but eventually the vehicle was recovered and the forces returned to their home forward operating bases.[92]

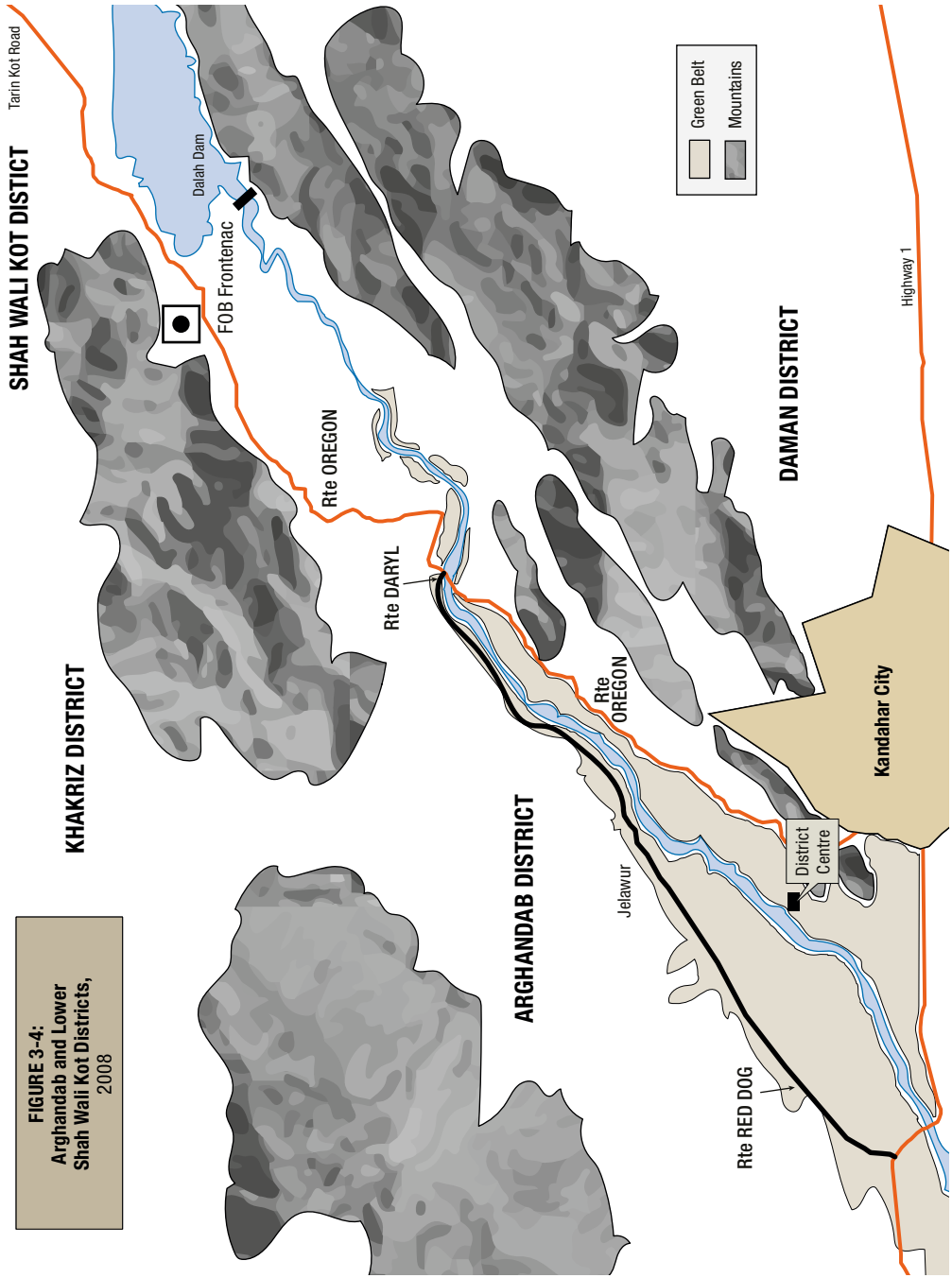


FIGURE 3-4:
Arghandab and Lower Shah Wali Kot Districts, 2008

Figure 3-4: Arghandab and Lower Shah Wali Kot Districts, 2008

Information from constant patrolling and connections with the population led to a cordon and search operation, CHATAK KOCHNIE KULE, in the village of Acakzo Soznay. This was an IED production site but it was derelict. By April, C Company was able to extend its patrolling area south into upper Arghandab District and was directed to define the area for white situational awareness purposes and gather intelligence on possible enemy approaches into upper Arghandab. With 80% of its efforts now focused on Arghandab, C Company operating methods had to change. Shah Wali Kot was arid and hilly, while Arghandab was a fertile green zone with desert hills to the northwest. Instead of using Route Oregon or Red Dog, which were susceptible to IEDs, C Company used the arid desert-like areas to manoeuvre and then insert into the green belt areas. "They didn't know where we were going to show up. LAVs can go anywhere, so you can pop up wherever. [The enemy] can see the desert plume but they don't know what's going on, and they don't know what size you are. Everything was disrupted."[93]

Maj Grubb was able to report in early May that "insurgent presence is increasing" in Arghandab and that the unfriendly town of Jelawur, which some heard was the hometown of Mullah Omar's wife, was one of the nodes of this activity.[94]

Zharey District Operations, March–April 2008

The situation in Zharey was significantly different in quality, scale and quantity. The newly inaugurated TF Zharey's laydown was a patchwork quilt of Afghan army, Afghan police, ANCOP, P-OMLT, OMLT and many other acronyms. The Afghans deployed 2nd Kandak, with company-sized strong points in Howz-e Madad, Ghundy Ghar, Sangsar and Patrol Base Wilson. These were all OMLT-mentored. The police forces had two sets of police sub-stations. The first were along Highway 1, now called "Ring Road South": Spin Pir, Patrol Base Wilson, Asheque and Senjaray. There was another at the refugee camp north of Zharey. The second set was south of Ring Road South: Pulchakan, Lakokhel, Kolk and Pashmul. For the most part, the interior police sub-stations were supported by Canadian P-OMLT, while the Highway 1 police sub-stations were American-mentored. Due to Focused District Development, there were fewer Afghan National Police and the rest were backfilled with ANCOP from Kabul, again mentored by American police mentors. (See Figure 3-5.)

The men who sorted and coordinated this "Tower of Babel" as best they could were Maj Bob Ritchie and Capt Jon Snyder, both from the OMLT. Over the course of March–April 2008, they used the Joint District Coordination Centre and force of personality to make this system of systems work as best it could. The OMLT and P-OMLT mentors worked long days in isolated, alien environments, alongside men whose loyalties appeared to be uncertain at any given time. It was exhausting and potentially soul-destroying work, where mentoring under fire extracted every ounce of energy it could.

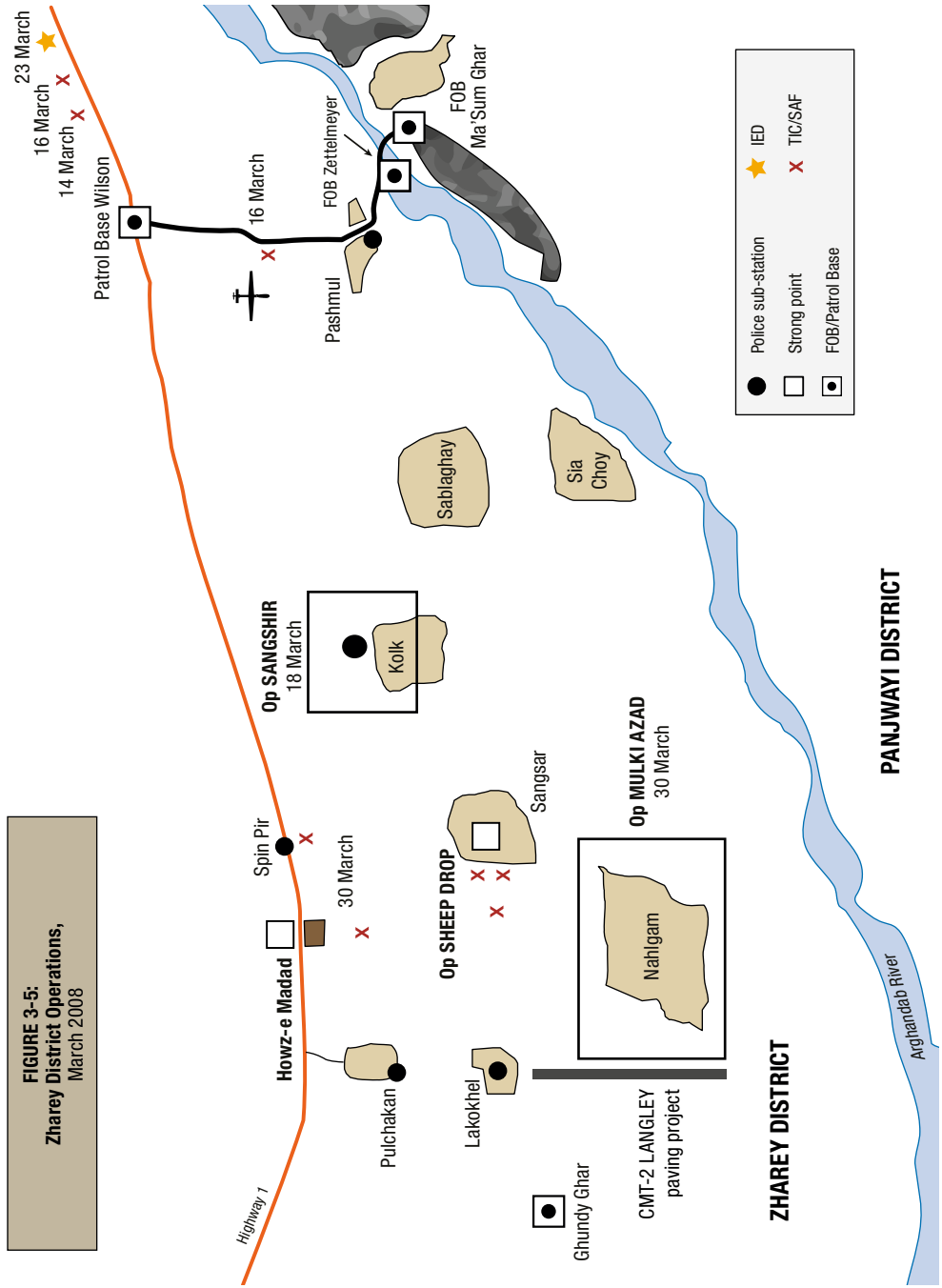


Figure 3-5: Zharey District Operations, March 2008

CIMIC teams from the PRT were also involved in Zharey operations. By the end of March, CIMIC coordinated with the Zharey District coordination centre. Ritchie, who served as the PRT operations officer in 2005, knew the district leader, who had been the Panjwayi District leader in 2005, and worked closely with the District Development Assembly, such as it was.[95]

Throughout March, the CIMIC teams learned that the pressing issues in Zharey related to property expropriation for the creation of the "tactical infrastructure," damage caused back in 2006 during Operation MEDUSA, and Route Summit irrigation issues. In many cases, it was a circular argument: "This is a continuing theme with claimants where ISAF absolves itself from responsibility for private land occupied by the ANSF and defers assistance requests to the Government of Afghanistan. This only fuels discontent and lack of faith with the Government of Afghanistan and paints ANSF/ISAF in a similar light."[96]

As for the district processes, people in Zharey "have not seen their shura rep in over a year…. Farmers stated that they had no confidence in the shura or the Zharey District leader. They claimed that the shura rep would keep any money given to [them] for development and reconstruction and not get to those in need."[97] Summit was still a bleeding wound: "The lack of public consultation regarding the paving of Route Summit has left many farmers in Pashmul angry with CANADIANS in particular. Angering the farmers has led to a dramatic reduction in cooperation and could lead to IEDs and INS activity not being reported, or worse, farmers assisting insurgents."[98]

In another case, a special operations forces operation near Ghundy Ghar detained a local person. When that person's return was not forthcoming, his family attempted to go through channels to get him released. The family stopped providing water supplies to the Afghan National Army and Canadian OMLT out of frustration when they received no answer over a protracted period: "they have been essentially shunned by the [-----] family which whom they previously had an outstanding working relationship."[99] Understanding the value of local religious engagement, however, the OMLT developed relationships with a number of mullahs in Zharey. These men provided warning of IED placement, and insight into how the Taliban were intimidating the population to assist them. They also identified a key insurgent command node.[100]

The insurgency in Zharey throughout March initially appeared dormant. In early March, however, the Taliban in Kandahar Province started what amounted to a "war of the cell phones." Correctly assessing that cell phones were the primary means by which the population connected with the police in Zharey, Panjwayi, and elsewhere through the Joint District Coordination Centres or the JPCC, they ordered the Roshan and AWCC (Afghan Wireless Communication Company) cell phone companies to turn off their systems at night. Both companies complied after the insurgents in Kandahar City burned a Roshan

tower and two other towers in the city were destroyed by other means. In one week, five cell towers were destroyed. TF Kandahar was warned that "as cellular coverage degenerates, the perception of security throughout the district will also diminish."[101] By mid-March, citywide coverage was restored but the companies kept the systems off at night west of the city, particularly in Maywand, Zharey and Panjwayi.[102]

Another enemy activity designed to demonstrate their power to the population was the creation of numerous temporary vehicle checkpoints. This served not only as an intimidation measure but also reinforced the perception that there were Taliban-controlled "no-go" areas, whether they be virtual or real. The more there were, the less virtual they became. This tactic was difficult to counter if there was no enduring presence by the security forces. Combined with the "war of the cell phones," it served to decouple the population from the government.

There were also new enemies in town. Three Quetta-connected leaders accompanied by a team of IED training specialists were identified as being in Zharey District. Some of these personnel appeared to understand the limitations that existed regarding ISAF Rules of Engagement:

> Following the strike by a Reaper on 22 March 2008, an assessed insurgent was seen to use a child or adolescent as a shield against further ISAF attack….He then picked up the wounded insurgent and appeared to compel one of the children to walk in front of him. He was seen pushing the child several times, keeping the youth moving in front of him. This continued to 400m.… At no time was the youth employed to assist in carrying the wounded insurgent.[103]

The OMLT and 2nd Kandak focused on training for night patrols and it took most of the month to work up to the first one. Operation MAAR PUTH [Hiding Snake], a cordon and search operation, resulted in no contact. Eventually, the commanding officer went on leave and gave instructions that no kandak-level operation was to be mounted when he was away. When supplies ran low at Strong Point Sangsar, the kandak leadership planned Operation SHEEP DROP and mounted its own armed resupply mission. There were two contacts with six insurgents who implemented a "shoot and scoot." The OMLT had a joint terminal air controller along who called in a pair of French fighter bombers, but they were unable to acquire the insurgents. This was a successful mission and demonstrated a level of capability unthinkable in 2006. There were several encounters with insurgents in the following days, leading the OMLT to report that "increased problems around Strong Point Sangsar highlights the threat to Ring Road South…both this location and the area east of FOB Wilson will require a deliberate clearance operation to ensure security."[104] A suicide attack then occurred against BGen Laroche's 99 TAC convoy on 12 March, wounding one Canadian, killing one Afghan and disabling an RG-31.[105]

By this time, the OMLT developed a system whereby the SECFOR team in its RG-31s (used to resupply the Canadians in the various sub-stations and strong points) had a joint terminal air controller attached. If the security forces found themselves in a contact, this reaction force deployed and called in close air support, as the Afghan army and police had no means to do so. The tank squadron at Ma'Sum Ghar played a role in Zharey security, acting its role as "battleship." Leopard 2 tanks in run-up positions held observation over the southern part of Route Summit. The tanks' optical systems observed an enemy dig team and the battle group Tactical Operations Centre was able to vector an MQ-1 Predator over the road, which subsequently engaged and killed the two-man IED team.[106]

The enemy applied a variety of pressures to PSS Kolk and it appeared as though their PSYOPS was working and the Kolk police were going to walk away from the police sub- station. A combination of information from the American police mentors on a cache, plus the need to mount a show of force, produced Operation SANGSHIR on 18 March. 2nd Company from Howz-e Madad and Weapons Company from Patrol Base Wilson manoeuvred around Kolk to block while ANCOP and U.S. police mentoring teams conducted a cache search. Afghan police and the P-OMLT mentors established vehicle checkpoints to catch anybody coming out. Though there was no cache found, this size of multi-agency operation was a major breakthrough in that it was planned and led by the Afghans (though heavily mentored by Maj Ritchie and the OMLT).[107]

The insurgent operational tempo picked up dramatically the last week of March. Police and P-OMLT patrolling from Kolk got hit and called in a QRF consisting of the OMLT SECFOR and an air controller who brought an F-15 to bear. A Strong Point Sangsar resupply mission was hit the next day. In both instances, the enemy used "shoot and scoot" tactics and there were no friendly casualties. The enemy then shifted attention to Highway 1. Two civilian resupply convoys were shot up, back-to-back. A huge IED targeting a TF 32 convoy killed two Americans, wounded three and threw a HETT transporter truck 50 feet and flipped it upside down, cratering the whole road.[108] Afghan army and police patrols along the highway kept uncovering device after device. The OMLT once again reported that "There are too many IEDs east of FOB Wilson on Ring Road South. Communications with ANCOP checkpoints [in Asheque and Senjaray] are non-existent. When local national intelligence is collected and passed on it must be acted on in a more timely fashion."[109]

Another larger kandak–police operation, MULKI AZAD, was planned for 30 March. The OMLT liaised with B Squadron and was able to gain their support to establish a block on Route Langley, while the Afghan army and police ranged into the Nahlgam area. During that operation, a Leopard 2A6M struck an IED and had to be recovered by the armoured recovery vehicle. 2 Platoon from C Company and 2 Troop covered the extraction, but damage to the road, coupled with the high water table, bogged the entire column.

Indeed, the mud was up the turret rings on some tanks as the road collapsed. A major effort had to be mounted into the first week in April to recover all eight vehicles, with the combat engineers gravelling Route Langley to the site first, followed by extraction of the vehicles.[110] The silver lining in this otherwise embarrassing incident was that it led to the possibility of prioritizing a paving project for Route Langley.

The clearest indication that the enemy were back occurred on 30 March. PSS Spin Pir and the strong point at Howz-e Madad were attacked simultaneously. The Howz-e Madad attack was "shoot and scoot" to pin down the defenders but the Spin Pir attack was protracted: The enemy poured heavy fire at the Afghan police and the P-OMLT. An RPG round hit the station watch tower, wounding three Canadians. WO Milton Verge was severely wounded but engaged the enemy with suppressive fire and was able to direct the police to conduct an effective point defence of the position, which stalled the enemy attack. He was later decorated with the Medal of Military Valour for his actions. C Company's platoon on Route Langley responded, as did the Afghan company and Canadian mentors based at Howz-e Madad. From FOB Wilson, the PRT force protection platoon and a CIMIC team deployed, with all forces converged on PSS Spin Pir. With overwhelming force arriving, the enemy broke contact and fled south. The Afghan company and the CIMIC team pursued groups of insurgents, and engaged eight enemy, killing or wounding five. The enemy withdrew again, this time to the southeast, where a Sperwer TUAV observed them dispersing. Close air support was on station but positive identification was lost.[111]

At this time, the Construction Management Organization deployed CMT-2 to Zharey District. CMT-2's purpose was to hire local people as part of a paving project on Route Langley, much like the Fosters paving project did in Panjwayi. CMT-2, consisting of 23 personnel, TLAVs and trucks, moved to a combat outpost south of Howz-e Madad and opened up shop. The initial response was encouraging: 120 people arrived to be hired and work started. However, CMT-2 learned very quickly that these workers arrived from Kandahar City in black SUVs escorted by private security. They obviously were not local people. And, when a junior officer inexperienced in "Afghan time" prevented a number of individuals from working because they were late, RPG fire was directed at the CMT-2 combat outpost. Over the course of the next months, CMT-2 was regularly subjected to harassing fire, which led to defensive measures, even to the point where MWO Alison Clark, a pay clerk assigned to CMT-2, manned a Carl Gustav. Despite these challenges, the team was able to connect with the local population on a limited basis and even collect information on enemy activity. For example, one insurgent team consisted of four Afghans, led by a Chechen. The Afghans on these teams were either out-of-area fighters or locals, or both.[112]

Panjwayi District Operations, March–April 2008

On 16 March, 2 PPCLI Battle Group took operational control of Panjwayi District. There was no "TF Panjwayi" equivalent for the ANSF, and the command relationship or coordinating relationship between the ANSF and the battle group was confusing. Two of Maj Lane's four platoons were deployed in Ma'Sum Ghar as the QRF with the tank squadron, and as defence and security for Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar. One platoon was spread out at PSSs Mushan, Talukan, Zangabad and Haji along Route Fosters West, with Afghan police and P-OMLT mentors. The fourth platoon handled security for the Fosters West road-paving project, which was just getting off the ground. Because of the Focused District Development programme, the police were eventually replaced with Afghan army and Canadian OMLT.[113]

The problem with this deployment related to the small numbers of personnel in each police sub-station. There were usually eight Canadian infantry, two Canadian Military Police, an interpreter and eight Afghan policemen, or later, 14 Canadian infantry, six to eight Afghan soldiers and an interpreter. This meant that the patrols that went out were small, basically section-sized, because the remainder had to hold the sub-station. These patrols were extremely vulnerable and the insurgents could overwhelm them if there were not enough enablers on call. Ground QRF was problematic given the IED situation on Fosters West. Thus, these four sub-stations were very small security bubbles along the road and were not able to deliver enduring security in the communities south of the road.[114]

That said, however, the Canadian junior leaders in the police sub-stations established as aggressive a patrol matrix that they could, given the circumstances. They were able to range out about 1.5 kilometres away from their bases and gather pattern of life information and White SA. They uncovered an extensive intimidation campaign in Zangabad and did what they could to tap into the local psyche.[115] But then, the enemy took notice and ambushed a patrol outside Talukan. Overwhelmed, the Canadians and Afghans withdrew into the sub-station and close air support was called in. By the time an F-15 arrived, the enemy were gone. Aggressive patrolling resumed, within the limits of capabilities.[116]

The situation was different over in Strong Point Mushan, which boasted an Afghan army company and Canadian mentors. Mushan had the manpower to hold the strong point and range out patrols to 5 kilometres. This put the population centre and bazaar in Mushan within the bubble. Slowly, trust and an economic relationship was established between the strong point's occupants and the community and, with that as a basis, information started to flow about what the enemy was up to. The Taliban had a new IED cell active and it was focusing on the horn of Panjwayi.[117]

TF Kandahar decided to mount another clearance of Fosters West with the stated intention of gaining freedom of movement in Panjwayi District's "vital lines of communicaion" to facilitate "ADZ expansion." Operation TOORA AZADI (see Figure 3-6) included B Company, tanks from B Squadron, 23 Field's EROC Huskies and Buffalos, and a composite Afghan army company supported by the OMLT. Lasting nearly three weeks, TOORA AZADI was an expensive operation from almost every perspective. Launched on 26 March, the force cleared up to PSS Zangabad with no IEDs found. A brace of 107mm rockets struck FOB Ma'Sum Ghar as the troops leaguered for the night. On the morning of 27 March, a Coyote from D Squadron detonated an IED based on a 155mm artillery round as it patrolled the cleared route east of Zangabad. Three Canadians were seriously wounded. That night, an MQ-1 Predator got "eyes on" a three-man IED dig team and two sentries. An F-16 came in and strafed them, ending their activities. Moving out on 28 March, the force cleared west to 1 kilometre away from PSS Talukan. A LAV III struck an anti-personnel mine. Notably, this was a Soviet-designed PMN anti-personnel mine, not an IED. The force leaguered again for the night and prepared to clear back to Route Brown near Sperwan Ghar the next day. That operation occurred without incident. ISTAR reportage indicated that the enemy were frantically digging up mines from other locations and trying to move them to emplace them ahead of the column.[118] After a day of aggressive patrolling around PSS Haji, the column headed west again to Zangabad on 31 March, where a Husky hit an IED and was disabled. At this point, the decision was made by TF Kandahar to continue the operation into April after repairing the damaged EROC equipment. Stepping off yet again, on 2 April, headed west to Talukan, the EROC Buffalo was disabled, wounding a Canadian engineer. Then there was another IED or mine strike. TF Kandahar ordered the TOORA AZADI force to halt. ISTAR reportage indicated that "the IED strike area was cleared a few hours before the incident by the [route clearance package]. This indicates that the insurgents have the capacity to hastily install and arm IEDs on Route Fosters with CF operating nearby."[119]

The column was now ordered to proceed to PSS Talukan, conduct dismounted patrols, reconstruct the sub-station and resupply the forces. While this was taking place, a P-OMLT RG-31 Nyala vehicle hit an IED west of Zangabad, wounding three Canadians and wrecking the RG-31. In due course, a B Company LAV III was IED'd in the same area, killing Pte Terry John Street. On 5 April, the column proceeded back to Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar. To cap things off, the enemy attacked PSS Talukan on 14 April in a coordinated assault from the east and southwest. 82mm recoilless rifle fire was directed against the sub-station. Firing back with every weapon available, the Canadians and Afghans were able to call in the M-777 guns. Despite the violence of the attack, there were no

FIGURE 3-6:
Operation TOORA AZADI – Panjwayi District,
March-April 2008

Figure 3-6: Operation TOORA AZADI – Panjwayi District, March-April 2008

Canadian casualties.[120] Operation TOORA AZADI confirmed that keeping Route Fosters West open was extremely problematic. Strong Point Mushan was, in the absence of dedicated Canadian or Afghan helicopters, cut off for the time being. The enemy were now on the ascendency in the horn of Panjwayi.

In the rest of Panjwayi District, Canadian CIMIC continued with its interactions with the district leader, Haji Baran. A CIMIC team report captured the nature of this relationship:

> [Haji Baran] seems to think that the PRT exists to give him money and do him personal favours. Most of his requests appear to revolve around personal needs and he has little concept of community responsibility. This will be a huge challenge to overcome. Recommend – Continue to work with the DL. Continue to foster the concept that public office entails more than stuffing one's pockets with cash and springing one's friends from prison. This may take some time and effort….[121]

That said, however, Haji Baran provided valuable insight for the Canadians. In his view, Baran noted that "many of the Afghan refugees returning from [Iran and Pakistan] have been influenced by propaganda and either become insurgents or support them."[122] The American Police Mentoring Team working with the ANCOP during the focused district development project built a checkpoint next to a mosque on Fosters East near Salehan village. ANCOP took over the mosque, which agitated the local people and created "negative [information operations]."[123]

> Baran mentioned that the reason Afghans resisted the Soviet invasion was because they interfered in government with a lack of respect for Islam. He said that if ISAF did not respect Islam, he would not be sitting with ISAF under any circumstances. He said that the insurgents spread lies that Haji Baran is the "son of Canadians" who are the enemies of Islam and Afghanistan. The insurgents are making large IO gains by painting ISAF as enemies of Islam and the Government of Afghanistan as ISAF's puppets.[124]

It is in this regard that the CIDA and DFAIT policies of non-engagement with religion were highly flawed. CIMIC operation Capt Michel "Bunny" Larocque, after spending months dealing with Panjwayi District, understood that the upcoming paving project on Fosters West was an ideal opportunity to cement Canadian–Panjwayian relations. The Sheikh Qalandar Baba mosque and the Haji Goloon Baba shrine lay astride the projected route. Working around these facilities could become problematic if it were not handled properly. Capt Larocque wanted funds for refurbishment for both. With the blessing of the population and their mullahs, it would be much easier to make headway in that area

while deflecting enemy information operations.[125] CIDA and DFAIT were unwilling to get involved, so the money for refurbishment came from Army coffers.

Another view came from a village elder from Sperwan, who was concerned that his people were losing support for the government:

> The GoA is its own worst enemy. Because of rampant bribery and corruption services have failed to appear. They have lost the faith and the good will of large segments of the population in Panjwayi which in turn allows the insurgents to flourish….This is the vital ground in this war. If there is a perception that the GoA is not worth fighting *for* we will inevitably lose ground to the insurgents. This could be the reason for the lack of progress in Panjwayi.[126]

The CIMIC teams reported also that the Route Brown land compensation issue remained a major grievance:

> The longer this drags on (among others) the more the population swings away from government support. The lack of compensation for expropriated land is a huge obstacle to building confidence in government in Panjwayi. As Panjwayi is a volatile district with a propensity to insurgent activity, a sense of urgency should fuel efforts to placate the population.[127]

Working through the international organizations to get things done remained problematic. For example, the refugee camp leadership asked once again for PRT help with humanitarian assistance and were informed that the "appropriate UN agency" would help. The refugee camp leadership told CIMIC that the camp needed help, now, and they had "very little faith in the UN coming to their assistance."[128]

The more CIMIC probed, the more skulduggery they uncovered. By April, the skepticism level reached dizzying heights as the Construction Management Organization arrived in the district to work with CIMIC and look into how the hiring process for the Route Fosters paving project should work in conjunction with the district government. They were informed that Haji Niamatullah Halimi, the head of the District Development Assembly, had been assassinated. Baran played this down, telling everybody it was a Taliban standing order to target shura members.[129] Others were not assured by this statement. However, before a serious probe could begin, an airstrike on the night of 2 April killed three insurgents who were laying an IED on Fosters. Rumours abounded in the district that these men were merely farmers killed indiscriminately by ISAF and there was talk of riots and burning government buildings. Haji Baran told the Canadians that he personally intervened to stop all of this to protect his Canadian friends.[130] The reality, however, was that there was TUAV footage that clearly depicted what the insurgents were up to but it could not be shown to the population.

When the CIMIC and Construction Management Organization teams returned to the issue of the paving project, it was a little too convenient that the District Development Assembly leader was recently deceased. When they contacted the UN representatives who were supposed to handle the District Development Assembly, they were told that "the DDA had been functioning well about two years ago." However, it "had transformed from a body for developing long-term economic strategies and instead had changed into a project generating machine…it was the DDA's role to determine district development priorities, where it fell to the district leader to step back and provide political leadership."[131]

And there was more. USAID approved money for fixing Route Brown and it sub-contracted to the Wara Construction Company to handle this project. One of the workers was murdered and Wara told the elders in Sperwan that they would not continue with the project. However, the Dastagiri Construction Company materialized and told the elders that they could do the job as they had their own security force. When CIMIC investigated, they learned that the Dastagiri security were all off-duty Afghan police, who were getting paid nearly ten times their government pay rate.[132] It is unlikely that these arrangements went through the Panjwayi District Development Assembly for consideration.

It was at this point that the PRT was permitted by Ottawa to temporarily deploy a DFAIT member to Panjwayi to augment the activities of the Joint District Coordination Centre, and the tank squadron leadership, who were about to assume more involvement in development, governance, and reconstruction matters. Putting their heads together, Maj Chris Adams, Capt Tory White and Karen Foss reviewed the structure and concluded that the Community Development Councils should retain their connection to the Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development. The UN was useless when it came to dealing with the District Development Assembly, so the Department of Foreign Affairs would try and mentor this process with Haji Baran, given there was no development assembly leader, until UN HABITAT could get its act together. For any other PRT-supported projects, the three agreed to work together at the district level to make them happen. It is precisely this sort of ad hoc arrangement that permitted Canada to move forward incrementally in places like Panjwayi.[133]

CIMIC's role in this was to monitor what was really happening outside the district centre. In a series of interviews in Bazaar-e Panjwayi, they were told that "the district shura and leader were corrupt, and any aid filtered through them would not reach the poor people of Panjwayi. They recommended direct visits to the villages to talk to the leaders of mosques who could then select four representatives per village to identify needs."[134] That was essentially in line with the Community Development Council concept, but it apparently was not operating. Probing further, CIMIC reported that:

> The DDA appears disorganized, evasive, and ineffective. It is the opinion of KPRT Det 52 that there are probably no CDCs in existence and the DDA have been giving projects of their own choosing to recipients of their own choosing.[135]

Furthermore, the CIMIC team assessed that:

> It is possible that Haji Baran recognizes that he will hold less power in Panjwayi if the power dynamic changes and would therefore be uncomfortable with the idea of tribal/political strife being settled. This is merely one theory to explain his motivations but would explain some of his behaviour.[136]

It did not help matters when Haji Baran conducted poppy eradication operations in the district by appropriating tractors at gun point, using the police.[137] Panjwayi was in trouble and it was only going to get worse.

Development and Reconstruction: The Provincial Reconstruction Team from March to April 2008

In February 2008, LCol Dana Woodworth took over from LCol Bob Chamberlain as the PRT commanding officer and was off to a running start along with his Deputy Commanding Officer, Maj Eric Perey. Having studied the PRT for some time before deploying, LCol Woodworth instituted several changes on arrival. He asked for and got an increase of CIMIC teams and capacity. While retaining the existing structure whereby a CIMIC team was responsible for a particular district, the number of districts the PRT was hoping to operate in was going to increase, therefore there was a need for more teams. The Specialist Engineer Team also evolved from a contracting authority and mentor to the business community, to having a validation capability vis-à-vis the expenditure of Canadian reconstruction money in Kandahar Province. This move increased accountability and provided more "metrics" on reconstruction activity as a whole. The project targeting/synchronization board process was streamlined to speed up the ability to spend reconstruction money. All of these changes were designed to increase the Canadian government's ability to measure what was going on in terms of development and to demonstrate that there was an increased effort in this area.[138]

In the early months of the new PRT, there was also an increase in the numbers of civilian PRT personnel from the OGDs. Few of these people had experience with a place like Afghanistan, and it took some time to integrate the military side of the PRT with the civilian side. That situation was affected by changes at the TF Kandahar level and by the creation of the Representative of Canada in Kandahar in April 2008, which will be touched on later.

Operationally, the PRT became district-focused. In March, for example, the PRT assigned CIMIC teams to Zharey, Panjwayi, Spin Boldak, Arghandab and Dand. Issues related to electricity and the loss of capacity of the Kajaki Dam meant that the PRT started to look more and more at Kandahar City as well. The PRT chose to focus on the District Development Assembly as its point of main effort in each district. Ideally, LCol Woodworth wanted increased Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development involvement in the province. This in part related to the increased belief among the population and the power brokers that the PRT was becoming the "Bank of CIMIC":

> KPRT Det 52 has decided to refocus efforts away from quick impact projects (QIPs) and more towards strengthening governance and gathering of White [Situational Awareness]. KPRT Det 52 wants to move towards strategic sustainable goals. This may be an unpopular decision among the select few locals who have been benefitting financially from KPRT QIPs.... The QIPs are offering diminishing returns in terms of goodwill and long term effects in the region and a change of strategy is long overdue.[139]

Of course, crossing paths with local power brokers would cause problems later, particularly on the Route Fosters West paving project, but this direction was undoubtedly the correct one at the time. The PRT was not the provincial government. Steps were also taken in the PRT to regain momentum at the provincial level by trying once again to work with Asadullah Khalid's people to formulate a provincial development plan. This exercise in frustration lasted for months until there were changes to provincial governance.[140] The districts that had some form of functioning development assemblies in early 2008 were Dand, Spin Boldak and Arghandab. To suggest that there was a seamless transfer of reconstruction and development funds from Kabul to Kandahar, to those districts and then to the development councils at the community level would be a gross exaggeration. Arghandab had a functioning development assembly but, apparently, only one development council.[141] The situation in Dand, according to the district leader, was "the best it's been in ten years."[142] There were 56 confirmed Community Development Councils active in Dand and word came in that the rural development ministry was also active in Daman District. CIMIC teams reported that Dand District Development Assembly members "were very excited to have the KPRT in their district."[143] And, with a new district chief of police replacing the infamous Col. Akka, security improved. As for Spin Boldak, the usual rough and tumble of Achakzai–Noorzai politics played out but by April, CIMIC teams reported that "The fact that the DDA is now operating in a cooperative fashion for the good of the people is a landmark step for a group that has garnered a reputation for mismanagement

and general dysfunction."[144] On the downside, the PRT failed to develop an appropriate strategy for religious engagement. Some of the CIMIC teams were dismissive of this aspect of local power brokerage:

> The District Scholars Shura represent yet another power broker in the district. As with the others, they tout their influence with the population and request special consideration for the provision of development dollars. They are a competing source of influence that come to associate ISAF with development funds and despite efforts to promote unity and cooperation, appear interested in their own agendas.[145]

Only two CIMIC teams reported on religious engagement during this period. Some operators understood the role religious leaders played at the community level, but attempts to get the PRT to understand the importance of religious engagement were unsuccessful.

Another change of emphasis was in Kandahar City. Previously, the PRT focused on police support (Operation PORTCULLIS, for example), but with the separation of policing support into a whole new line of operations, the PRT retained less and less involvement. It continued to support Canadian civilian police trainers dealing with the Regional Training Center and the in-house police training facility and housing the American Police Mentoring Teams at Camp Nathan Smith. The PRT also improved its contacts with the mayor to determine the best means to support his efforts. The PRT made contact with a variety of organizations and commands trying to address the Kajaki Dam–Kandahar City power grid issue. The details are beyond this study here but, in effect, this was a DFAIT/CIDA/USAID problem that involved the acquisition of generators located in New Orleans as a temporary measure until a turbine could be delivered and installed at Kajaki Dam later in 2008.[146] Until that was addressed, rolling blackouts in the city became the norm, leading to all sorts of dire conspiracy theories among the population and undermining support for the government.

The Dahla Dam project was essentially a whole-of-government portfolio handled by the Representative of Canada in Kandahar, with the PRT providing protective support and local contact knowledge as required. In addition to embassy diplomacy, SAT-A's influence was leveraged in Kabul as required, especially their contacts in the Ministry of Energy and Water. By April, ambitious plans regarding the dam's refurbishment were under consideration by the OGDs. TF Kandahar's concern, expressed to Ottawa, remained the fact that:

> It will require significant coordination and cooperation with both Coalition and Afghan security forces to establish the conditions necessary for the project to proceed and it will be necessary to compromise both efficiency and work sequencing to keep the security burden manageable during project execution….Many international donors have expressed concerns about involving themselves in what is seen as a high-risk environment and it will likely be necessary to complete the advanced works as a demonstration that development is possible before full project funding can be achieved. In support of this it is important that communications programmes be initiated to inform the public how critical it is that this work proceed unimpeded and to telegraph to the Taliban that attacking this project would negatively impact their own local support.[147]

Governance Matters, March–April 2008

The Canadian government was more and more attuned to the fact that Governor Asadullah Khalid was a hindrance to the coalition effort in Kandahar Province. There were media allegations that Khalid had a private prison at the Governor's Palace, where detainees had been abused. There were frequent allegations of his involvement in the narcotics trade. That said, however, provincial council leader Ahmad Wali Karzai was undermining Khalid, subtly. Karzai planted the seed with Canadian representatives that Khalid was increasingly problematic because of his poor treatment of tribal elders, and that this was undermining government legitimacy.[148] Indeed, "The recent suicide bombing targeting an Alikozai police chief in Arghandab District further divided the Alikozai from Khalid….The dismissal of the deputy chief of police, another Alikozai, and the Presidential 'crowning' of Karimullah as tribal leader of the Alikozai without prior consultation further lower their support for the government."[149] Certainly, Khalid's lack of emphasis on the reconstruction and development aspects of governance was noticed by TF Kandahar,[150] as was his appointment of problematic district leaders and district chiefs of police. Attempts to produce a provincial development plan were stalled, and this was seen by CIDA to be one of the keys to breaking the deadlock on getting more Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development involvement and thus more monies flowing from Kabul.

At Regional Command (South), MGen Lessard and his staff concluded that:

> The influence of local power brokers, which during recent weeks has become more significant, is one of the most destabilizing factors effecting governance in the South. The interference by certain individuals, many of whom have held positions of authority in the past, is undermining those governors and leaders formally appointed. The situation is compounded by [the Government of Afghanistan's] apparent reluctance to publicly back the appointed individuals in favour of the power brokers.[151]

Canadian tolerance of Asadullah Khalid's behaviour ended in early 2008. The policy of what might be called "better the devil you know than the one you don't" had been in place since 2006,[152] but with more and more negative information in play, both public and internal, coupled with Ahmad Wali Karzai's apparent "green light," enough was, perhaps, enough. Khalid was a block to Canada's development strategy in Kandahar Province. On 14 April 2008, Foreign Minister Maxime Bernier asked the media rhetorically on a visit to Kandahar, "Is it the right person, at the right place at the right time?" The media took this as open criticism of Asadullah Khalid and concluded that Bernier was going to ask Hamid Karzai to replace Khalid.[153]

Kabul perceived this as Canadian interference with sovereign Afghan prerogatives and resulted in a cooling of the Canadian–Afghan relationship. Khalid remained in place for the time being to save face. In any event, the whole issue of Asadullah Khalid was mishandled and because of its proximity to the detainee issue, led to gridlock in Ottawa. Canadian media quoted a senior government official that "There was no policy for dealing with something like this, something sensitive. No one knew quite what to do."[154] Once again, the heightened expectations of a Canadian culture steeped in idealism clashed with Afghan realism and generated obstacles to larger Canadian strategic objectives.

The day after Bernier's comments were reported by Canadian and Afghan media, personnel from a CIMIC team and the Specialist Engineer Team working at Sarposa Prison were approached by jailed insurgents and told them they supported Bernier:

> Another theme was extreme happiness at the perception that the Canadian Government wanted to have the Governor of Kandahar replaced. Somehow the prisoners had heard of this and said it brought them great joy that "as long as [the Governor of Kandahar] and [Ahmad Wali Karzai] were in power they would fight 'Jihad' because GOK and AWK were 'abusing their positions, not taking care of human rights, and influencing tribal quarrels.'" The prisoners indicated that as long as the Canadians advocated the removal of [Khalid] that "not a single bullet would be fired at Canadians by insurgents". Furthermore since the political prisoners now "like" Canadian soldiers, they would like to see all Canadian soldiers convert to Islam so as not to be condemned to Hell upon death….The theme of hatred of [Khalid] is consistent with that put forth by a large proportion of the population throughout the province.[155]

Relief in Place: Thompson Replaces Laroche,May 2008

It was time for BGen Guy Laroche and his headquarters to depart and on 2 May, BGen Denis Thompson took command of TF Kandahar. The main units under command remained the same, while the ASIC was new and led by Maj Paul Chura, and LCol Dwayne Hobbs took over the JPCC to become, in effect, BGen Thompson's

personal representative to the Governor. There were substantial changes to TF Kandahar to reflect the post-Manley report process. The first was the addition of the Representative of Canada in Kandahar.

The question was: did Commander TF Kandahar report to the Representative of Canada in Kandahar? Was she a "co-commander"? And if so, what effect would that have on the Afghans? Were there two solitudes, with the armed forces in one box and the OGDs in another, reporting to TF Kandahar and the Representative of Canada? Was the Development Advisor to Commander TF Kandahar now the Head of Aid for Kandahar or not? Where did the PRT fit into this? And what about SAT-A? None of this was clear when the new headquarters took over.

The drive by David Mulroney to assert civilian leadership over Canadian operations in Afghanistan led to the imposition of what came to be called the whole-of-government approach on TF Kandahar. Unsatisfied with previous efforts to synergize the Canadian effort in the Afghanistan task force, and now in a position to assert more control because of his relationship to the Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan,[156] David Mulroney continued to assert control over the foreign affairs positions in Afghanistan. These people, unfortunately, reflected Mulroney's lack of experience and qualifications in strategy formulation, operational planning, military operations or interdepartmental operations in conflict zones.

Arif Lalani remained as ambassador, with the Representative of Canada reporting to him. The 34-year old representative, Elissa Golberg, lacked any ground-level experience in either conflict zones or humanitarian relief operations, and had no operational planning expertise or experience.[157] Like Lalani, Golberg had credibility with Mulroney and the Ottawa bureaucracy, but she lacked credibility with the Kandahari power brokers. According to JTF Afghanistan headquarters personnel, the Afghan leadership in Kandahar frequently deferred to BGen Thompson rather than Golberg during meetings.[158] Thompson and Golberg formulated a détente so that business could proceed between the Canadian government departments in Kandahar.

Mulroney, Lalani and Golberg were overmatched in the Afghanistan environment long before they even set foot on the ground. Why more experienced and perhaps culturally appropriate personnel were not selected for these positions at this time, is a legitimate question for those involved in selecting Canada's senior civilian leadership for Afghanistan. Attributes that may have been appropriate in Ottawa bureaucratic circles were less than useful in a Kandahar environment, where respect and credibility was measured differently. Military commanders carried more weight with the Kandahari power structure, a point brought home time and again, quietly and subtly, by the Afghans to those who would listen.

It is crucial to understand at this juncture that these comments are not personal attacks on the senior Canadian diplomatic leadership in Afghanistan. Their purpose is to highlight extant insensitivity on the part of the Ottawa bureaucratic culture[159] that generated unnecessary interdepartmental friction and produced questionable national objectives at a time when Canadian soldiers were getting killed and wounded. In Afghanistan male elders, especially male elders that carry weapons and have demonstrated access to more and bigger weapons, simply have more credibility in Pashtun culture than those who are not male, are not elders, and do not know how to use force. Though unpalatable to some vis-à-vis Canadian culture and values, this was the cold, hard, reality in Afghanistan.

Back in Ottawa, the Manley Panel recommendations were well-received by Prime Minister Harper. The Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan was to implement the recommendations, define priorities and staff all of this activity. This process was dubbed ROLLING START. According to David Mulroney, Manley Panel member Derek Burney pushed for measurable objectives and an end date for the mission. The Prime Minister also agreed with the idea of an end date. The logic was that the proposed objectives needed an end date so that they could be measured and thus their effectiveness derived and explained in the Ottawa environment.[160]

The process by which the Cabinet priorities were generated involved a back and forth dialogue between the Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan and the Secretariat with input from the interested departments and agencies. The Canadian Forces, DND, CIDA and DFAIT fed David Mulroney as he had several dialogues with David Emerson, while the OGDs fed the Secretariat. The objective of the exercise was to gain bureaucratic "buy-in" in Ottawa, "to get them to own the project and collaborate," produce a draft memo to Cabinet and get that memo accepted by Cabinet. That process took several months.[161]

During the process, Emerson moved on and the Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan "became less cohesive." Mulroney believed that Peter Van Loan, Bev Oda and Lawrence Cannon were not "engaged" as much as they could or should have been. For example, Oda micromanaged CIDA money in Afghanistan: everything above $10 000 had to be signed off by her personally. In another case, the RCMP demanded that its chain of command approve the deployment of CIVPOL officers outside the PRT compound.[162]

From March to May 2008, the Cabinet Committee and the Secretariat interfaced to produce the first public report to Parliament. In this report, the Canadian government effectively replaced the long-standing strategic objectives that governed the Canadian mission since November 2001. Instead of eliminating the Al Qaeda organization as a continuing terrorist threat, denying Al Qaeda the use of Afghanistan as a base for global terrorist operations and assisting in the reconstruction of Afghanistan:

> The strategic objective of the Canadian engagement in Afghanistan is to make measurable progress between now and 2011 toward building a more secure Kandahar that is better governed and can deliver base services to its citizens, supported by a more capable national government that can better manage Afghanistan's borders and sustain stability and reconstruction gains over the longer term.[163]

In addition to a lack of a clearly stated rationale for all of this, a number of points fall out of this paragraph alone. Kandahar was an operational and tactical problem, not a strategic one. This opened the doors to far too much control over operational and tactical matters by elements that were removed from the realities of Kandahar. Second, by focusing exclusively on Kandahar, important and crucial arenas for Canadian engagement like Kabul and Pakistan were neglected. This approach severely restricted or even neglected the existing vertically integrated Canadian system for engaging Afghanistan from Kandahar to Kabul. Indeed, according to some observers, there were elements that even wanted that structure dismantled because there was supposedly too much Canadian military influence. What the June 2008 report did note was the establishment of six Cabinet priorities and, in time, measurable benchmarks that would follow so the Canadian public could see progress:[164]

1. Enable the ANSF in Kandahar to sustain a more secure environment and promote law and order;

2. Strengthen Afghan institutional capacity to deliver core services and promote economic growth, enhancing the confidence of Kandaharis in their government;

3. Provide humanitarian assistance for extremely vulnerable people, including refugees, returnees and internally displaced people; and

4. Enhance border security, with facilitation of bilateral dialogue between Afghanistan and Pakistan authorities.

Nationally, Canada will help:

1. advance Afghanistan's capacity for democratic governance by contributing to effective, accountable public institutions and electoral processes; and

2. facilitate Afghan-led efforts toward political reconciliation.

Nowhere was there mention of the insurgency, why it existed, what fueled it, who created it, or how to challenge and defeat it. Indeed, defeating the insurgency did not appear to be a Canadian strategic priority. It was as if the Canadian government did not believe the insurgency could be defeated and Canada should gracefully exit stage left three years hence. Or, taken another way, it appeared that those formulating the priorities believed that by merely strengthening the Afghan government, the insurgency would simply run out of steam and disappear.

It took from June to December 2008 to articulate those and other benchmarks fully. During that time, JTF Afghanistan had to respond to guidance from ISAF; Regional Command (South); and CEFCOM. All of these entities were revamping their approaches, but only CEFCOM was able to peek into the inner workings of the Cabinet Committee and what it wanted to see happen in Kandahar. All of that to say that there were multiple concurrent processes that were not necessarily meshing for the first half of 2008, but that Canada's soldiers continued to conduct operations in an increasingly violent Kandahar environment.

The post-Manley demand by Ottawa for metrics played a greater role in how TF Kandahar did business. Now that the Canadian government promised measurable progress, a common language was needed to explain to the media, the government and the Canadian people what Canada was accomplishing in Afghanistan. This, in turn, had a serious impact on the BGen Thompson headquarters.

CIDA and DFAIT, let alone the RCMP and Correctional Services Canada, had no planning process comparable to the Canadian Forces one. Where the Canadian Forces viewed things in a tactical/operational/strategic framework, this language was non-existent in the cultures of the OGDs. Memorandums from Cabinet drove the "strategic" end of CIDA and DFAIT. CIDA had no "tactical" level: this is why CIMIC and the Construction Management Organization seemed to be doing all of the development work in the districts, for example. There was no "operational" level (see Figure 3-7) for CIDA or DFAIT, though the RCMP, with its involvement in training and mentoring, had a pseudo-operational level function.[165] Without having these basic building blocks aligned, no common measurements of effectiveness could be formulated to feed Ottawa's "benchmarks," whatever those were, when they were released in summer or fall 2008. Operation SHA AYENDA, the Laroche TF Kandahar plan, was now discarded eight months after it was conceived. CEFCOM campaign planning almost became null and void as it had no OGD input. A new Canadian plan that was inclusive of the OGDs and had their input was now required and would have to be formulated. That would take time. Some "bridge" plan was needed to get Canada from SHA AYENDA to the projected whole-of-government Provincial Action Plan.

This "bridge" was dubbed the "Interim Provincial Action Plan, or IPAP."[166] At the same time, MGen Lessard's Regional Command (South) headquarters was in the process of altering course from SHAM SHIR to a new ISAF plan called TOLO. The importance of this change was that NATO ISAF policy on counternarcotics contradicted Canadian policy on counternarcotics, so there was the potential for conflict between a NATO command (that happened to be led by a Canadian) and a Canadian national command.[167] This meant that the entire baseline plan for what TF Kandahar was doing in Afghanistan had to change. This was not going to happen overnight.

CF	DFAIT	CIDA	RCMP	CORRECTIONS
STRATEGIC	Yes	Yes	No	No
OPERATIONAL	RoCK	No	Yes (trg)	No
TACTICAL →	No	No CIMIC CMO	Yes P-OMLT	Yes

Figure 3-7: Disconnection in Operational Planning Levels, Canadian Whole-of-Government Structure in Afghanistan, 2008

The process started in mid-May 2008 with the establishment of the Interim Provincial Action Plan planning group by BGen Thompson.[168] Thompson's views on what was happening on the ground in Kandahar, however, flowed into the process as well and these amounted to several important mid-course guidance changes to TF Kandahar's direction. BGen Thompson laid out his preliminary thinking and sought unit and staff input. He liked the "Clear-Hold-Build" concept and added "Define" and "Enable" to it to reflect information gathering and capacity-building efforts. Kandahar City was the vital ground and was largely self-securing because "the population, through reason, does not buy the Taliban's ideas and is thus vulnerable only to intimidation tactics." Kandahar City, thus, was in Build-Enable. Arghandab and lower Shah Wali Kot, "being virtually mono-ethnic (Alikozai) has the potential to be self-securing as they are loyal to the present government." Arghandab was also in Build-Enable. Zharey and Panjwayi were "high risk districts" and, "by our own estimation we are not providing an enduring presence throughout." Zharey and Panjwayi were in Hold with some Build-Enable. Maywand would remain "the focus of many ISAF disruption operations." It was in a Define-Shape-Clear band of activity. Spin Boldak, on the other hand, was "generally satisfied with the status quo" and was in Build-Enable. Finally, "the rest of Kandahar Province enjoys no enduring presence." Ghorak, Khakrez, Mianishin, Upper Shah Wali Kot, Arghistan, Maruf, Shorabak and Registan Districts were all in Define-Shape.[169]

A number of deductions fell out of this plan:[170]

1. Kandahar City: reinforce all institutions as an example to the districts;

2. Arghandab: engage local leaders to ensure wobbly tribal structures stay up;

3. Zharey and Panjwayi: divide into manageable bites that can be retained with an enduring presence, more ISAF, more Afghan National Army and Afghan Uniformed Police with population;

4. Maywand: stretch objective;

5. Spin Boldak: no change; and

6. Rest of the province: Define and Shape.

BGen Thompson established several key areas he wanted TF Kandahar to focus on. The first was to actually "Hold" a district, and, given that all the districts were unique, detailed analysis was required to separate out the problem into manageable pieces. The Americans might deploy forces in response to the Manley Report. Where could they be employed most effectively? Second was police capacity-building, "where a truly multinational, interagency approach is needed to deliver the ultimate HOLDers of the ground: the Afghan Uniformed Police. There are no shortage of horses in this race so it will need a skilled touch to deliver effective police province-wide." Third was Human Geography, or what came to be called White Situational Awareness. More was needed to support the district approach and there was not enough horsepower in this field.

The fourth focus area were the Joint District Coordination Centres, seen by BGen Thompson as a means to "deliver on all three lines of operations at the district level." Thompson thought there was not enough definition at the Joint District Coordination Centre level and he wanted better coordination between the OMLT, Afghan army and battle group with the police, CIMIC and P-OMLT. On the development side, it was not clear to TF Kandahar what CIDA was doing about Dahla Dam and how that might relate to FOB Frontenac. That demanded resolution. The idea that security contractors could be used to free up Canadian combat troops was also mooted. Finally, where Maywand fit into the larger picture had to be defined.[171]

BGen Thompson also established "Operational Philosophy." This was an expansion on the Laroche headquarters "Concept of Operations." Elaborating on "Clear-Hold-Build," As Thompson put it, "Notwithstanding individual service, interdepartmental or agency accountability, the TFK multinational civilian and military team will work together and share the responsibility to build on successes to date. Recognizing that the support of the people is the main objective, and that we are engaged in a competition of ideas (sold through reason, incentives or intimidation), we must:[172]

1. have a comprehensive understanding of the human geography to determine the laydown of constituent groups of people [DEFINE];

2. determine which levers will deliver each constituent group of people to the GIRoA and IC ideas of the way forward in Afghanistan [SHAPE];

3. remove the insurgent influence over the people [CLEAR];

4. provide an enduring presence to reassure the people and isolate the insurgents [HOLD];

5. provide meaningful and focused reconstruction and development that addresses the needs and raises the quality of life of the people [BUILD and ENABLE]; and

6. build institutional capacity across all government sectors to ensure basic services including law and order, are provided to the people [BUILD and ENABLE].

The existing laydown of Canadian and Afghan forces in the province did not reflect the needs of the new direction that TF Kandahar was now going in Zharey District, which needed, in Thompson's view, "to be re-occupied as we had abandoned it to the OMLT and a Kandak." Canada had to "get out of Spin Boldak and get Recce Squadron doing more appropriate things." The threat level did not warrant having an infantry company in FOB Frontenac, so it should go to Zharey. Recce Squadron was better employed helping "make Shah Wali Kot and Arghandab self-securing through key leader engagements and development.[173] That was a start. Thompson wanted the Interim Provincial Action Plan co-signed by Elissa Golberg to ensure a unified front. That, however, proved to be an elusive proposition, in part because the Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan was still formulating "benchmarks" and "signature projects" for public consumption. TF Kandahar's plan remained unsigned three months later in August 2008.[174]

Operation SOHIL LARAM: Actions in Maywand, April–June 2008

In Maywand, the Gurkha battalion, supported by Canadian CIMIC, PSYOPS, engineers and artillery, swept Band-e Timor and backed up a whole new police force by building several checkpoints on Highway 1 and refurbished facilities at what became called FOB Hutal. Recce Company from 4th Kandak, the Combat Support kandak, deployed with Canadian OMLT mentors and a PSYOPS team to Hutal, where the mentors worked with both the Army and police on joint patrolling and IED response measures.[175] (See Figure 3-8.)

Maywand was still led by its district leader, Haji Saifullah, who was connected to Ahmad Wali Karzai and appointed by Governor Asadullah Khalid. The enemy slowly filtered back into the Band-e Timor region and quietly re-established their logistics and medical "ratlines" into western Zharey and the horn of Panjwayi. All remained quiet until early April, when Saifullah started conducting unilateral and selective poppy eradication with "his" police, who came all the way from Jalalabad. The locals promptly engaged them with small-arms fire. On one operation, seven police were seized, mutilated and killed.[176]

TF Kandahar had little visibility on what was happening in Maywand and, for the most part, it remained a Regional Command (South) issue because it was at the operational-level. Regional Command (South) eventually deployed the Portuguese Commando Company to Maywand again in March. This lash-up of local police, a Canadian OMLT team, an Afghan Recon Company, the Portuguese company (and later a U.S. Police Mentoring Team and two U.S. Special Forces ODA's,) dubbed Operation SOHIL LARAM, held sway from April to May. The idea was to patrol Highway 1 to keep it open, and conduct forays into Band-e Timor and the Garmabak area to keep the insurgents off balance. The Portuguese were unwilling to leave the highway and were problematic in other ways. The Canadian PSYOPS team noticed that Afghan "fence sitters" were now siding with the Taliban against them and this set back efforts in the district.[177] So was the Afghan Recon Company who went on strike and refused to patrol until they received resupply from Camp Hero, which they could not because of a problematic logistics system.[178]

During the course of May, the Governor removed Haji Saifullah and the chief of police after substantial pressure was brought to bear by Regional Command (South) headquarters. When the Portuguese redeployed at the end of May, the level of violence in the district increased dramatically. ISTAR reportage identified the newly activated Multan Network as the culprits. The Taliban conducted a substantial intimidation campaign, followed by a stepped-up series of ambushes on Highway 1. The situation was aggravated by the Focused District Development programme, which ripped out 200 police and replaced them with less than 100 ANCOP, which in turn reduced the patrolling tempo.

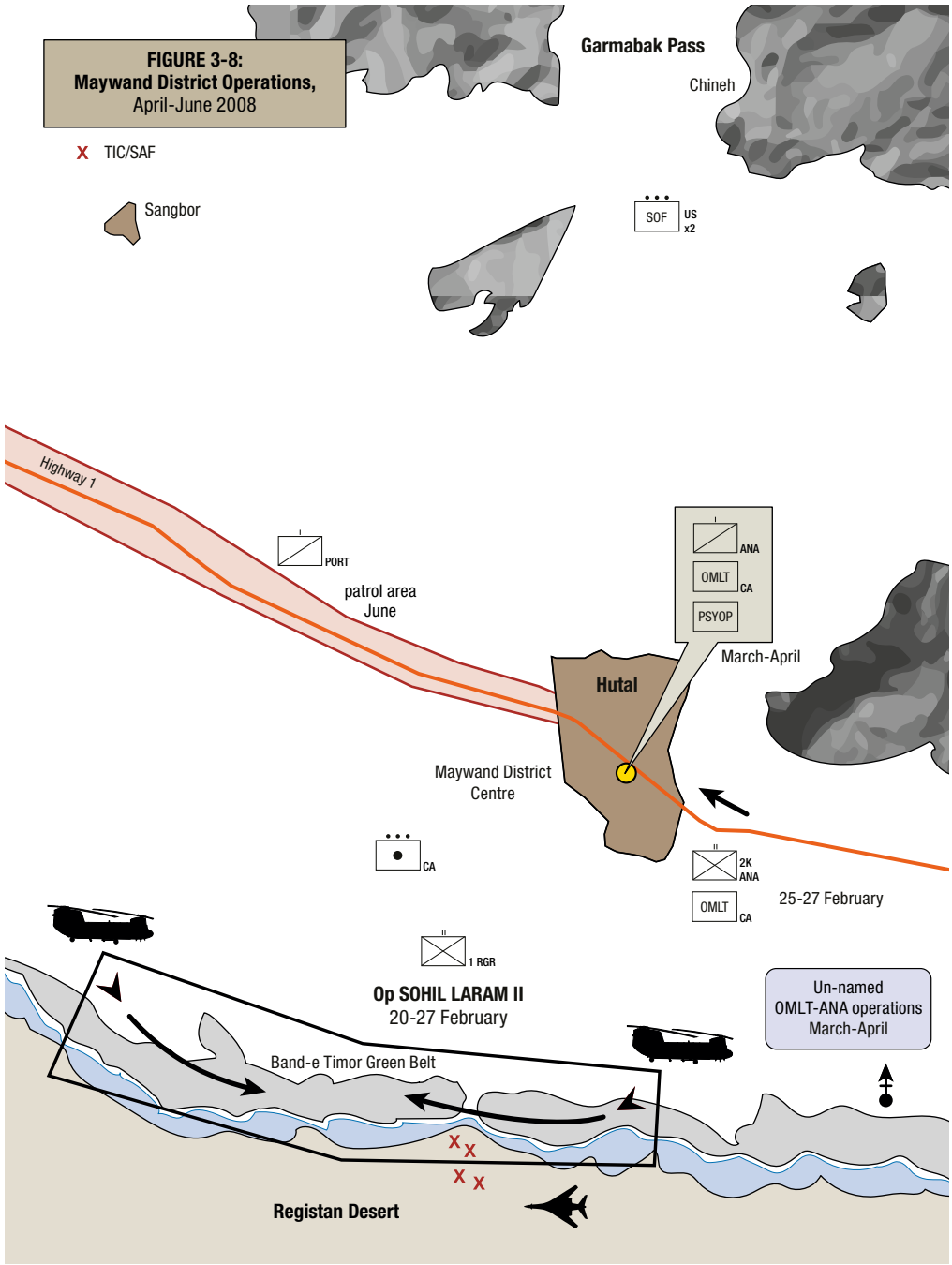


Figure 3-8: Maywand District Operations, April-June 2008

Photo Credit: Author

Civil-military cooperation and PSYOPS teams were a feature of practically every Canadian operation in southern Afghanistan by 2008. Here a Canadian team supporting 1 Royal Ghurkha Rifles provides restitution for damage incurred during a raid.

In order to regain the initiative and shame the Afghan soldiers and police into action, Capt Tyler Wentzell led an ad hoc team consisting of three Canadian OMLT mentors, a CIMIC operator, four PSYOPS operations, 14 American police mentors and two Afghan interpreters to conduct a "PSYOPS raid" in the communities southeast of Hutal on 5 June. Staying off the roads, the force popped up in several villages, delivered their message to the locals, and in 20 minutes was on their way to the next destination. In this way, it appeared to the enemy that ISAF was blanketing the area between Hutal, Band-e Timor and western Zharey District.[179]

During the course of these visits, documentation on the Taliban's efforts at parallel governance was acquired. Halfway through their programme, the force was engaged near the community of Zarzadeh with some form of crew-served weapon. Moving into a leaguer, the Canadians, Americans and Afghans observed several SUVs and pickup trucks loaded with armed fighting-age males converging on them. Then there was another explosion: the leaguer was under mortar fire, so Capt Wentzell repositioned, only to come under registered mortar fire a third time. The LAV III and RG-31 engaged the insurgent vehicles

and, after careful searching, identified mortar positions equipped with overhead cover. These were engaged with direct fire and destroyed. There were insurgents pouring out of buildings, and an SVD-equipped sniper was spotted and engaged. Unable to call in air or artillery support, the force withdrew toward Hutal. But the fight was not over. There were seven more contacts with a PKM team, and RPG fire was directed at the vehicles all the way back to Hutal. The enemy complained to their command system that they lost a lot of personnel, used up precious ammunition, and needed reinforcement immediately. The Afghan Recon Company was subsequently energized into patrolling Maywand again.[180]

Assisting the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit

The Maywand operations were important for strategic as well as operational reasons. The Canadian complaint in the Manley Report regarding a lack of NATO national participation in southern Afghanistan operations was in part answered by the Americans, who committed the 2,200-person 24 MEU to Afghanistan for a six- to eight-month period. 24 MEU consisted of a Marine infantry battalion, plus an aviation battalion with attack helicopters, medium lift helicopters and Harrier fighter bombers, making it a mobile and potent unit. In other words, it was not designed to conduct long-term Hold or Build operations. The decision was taken in ISAF headquarters, however, to commit 24 MEU to Helmand Province.[181]

One officer involved in assessing the planning that led to the decision noted that:

> initial determination pointed to Kandahar as vital ground in Regional Command (South) and [CSTC-A] recommended deploying the MEU there in its mobile role and then pushing west into Helmand if time and circumstances allowed. However, aggressive politicking at diplomatic and senior military levels by [the British] led to an executive decision to deploy it to Helmand.[182]

24 MEU arrived at KAF in February and was operational by April. Ignoring Canadian expertise in counter-IED operations in the province, 24 MEU decided to drive from Kandahar to Helmand and promptly lost two Marines on 15 April to a large IED attack on Highway 1. After that, 24 MEU liaised with TF Kandahar. All of the initial 24 MEU moves from KAF to Helmand were escorted or guided by Canadian units through Kandahar City and a "tunnel" on Highway 1. U.S. Marine Corps Sea Cobra attack helicopters, learning from the Banshee's operations with OH-58Ds, flew top cover. The Marines also operated Boeing ScanEagles, so a relationship developed between Maj McCauley's UAV organization and 24 MEU: they shared launchers and could hand off aircraft in stages because of the

distances between Helmand and KAF. Ammunition and spares were also interchangeable, given that the Marine LAV 25s were "related" to the LAV III and Coyote vehicles. The relationship strengthened throughout summer 2008.[183]

24 MEU arrived safely in Helmand and commenced operations in the Garmsir region in May–June. Though a province away, the Garmsir operations had a deleterious impact on the enemy's logistic ratline into Band-e Timor in Maywand District and ultimately Zharey and Panjwayi. When enemy forces in Zharey and Panjwayi complained to their superiors that summer about weapons and ammunition shortages, this was due to the combined effects of 24 MEU in Garmsir and the Canadian/Afghan forces in Maywand, Zharey and Panjwayi.[184]

Reorganizing Facts on the Ground, May 2008

As we have seen, BGen Thompson's concept of operations differed from the previous rotation's views. First, Spin Boldak was to be turned over to a variety of American police mentoring organizations working with Col. Raziq.[185] Recce Squadron could be more properly employed elsewhere. PRT CIMIC could handle Spin Boldak on the development front. C Company was in FOB Frontenac. This was seen to be too far away from the main fight in Zharey and Panjwayi. Thompson and Corbould wanted a mobile company that could base out of any infrastructure in Zharey and not be pinned down. Arghandab was considered "self-securing," and a combination of Recce Squadron and PRT CIMIC could work with the Afghan forces there.

A variety of American special forces' task forces worked with the KAU "police" on the Tarinkot Road and other forces loyal to Asadullah Khalid conducted disrupt operations in Khakrez and upper Shah Wali Kot. This was generally seen by TF Kandahar to be a "covering force" of sorts for the Arghandab front. Though those units were not under their control, TF Kandahar had good relations with MGen Lessard's Regional Command (South), who did have strong connections to TF 71.

As for Panjwayi, this district posed several problems. The diversity of the terrain and the geographical dispersion of the district from Mushan to Nakhonay made it difficult for a single company commander, in this case Maj Mike Lane, to focus his resources. Again, this was not a new problem as Maj Pat Robichaud and Maj Chris Henderson both previously encountered this dynamic. LCol Corbould decided to establish Panjwayi East and Panjwayi West. B Company would handle west, while B Squadron would handle east. How the redeployed forces would interact with the Afghan kandaks and the OMLT's TF Zharey structure, let alone the PRT, remained unclear initially. Later on, the tactical infrastructure along Route Fosters shifted from section manning to platoon manning at each outpost. Mushan had an Afghan company and Canadian mentors, while Talukan and

Zangabad were manned by a Canadian platoon and an Afghan platoon each. A Canadian section and an Afghan section went into Haji. All the police sub-stations were renamed "combat outposts," or COPs.

To confuse matters ever further, some higher entity in Kabul renamed the JPCC in Kandahar City and called it the "Operations Coordination Center-Province" or "OCC-P" in June. The Joint District Coordination Centres were still called Joint District Coordination Centres, but it was equally unclear at this point how they related to the OCC-P and the PRT, as they tended to be manned by Canadian mentors from the OMLT and the P-OMLT. Another change was the decision to hire private security to handle forward operating base security. The creation of an Afghan government process to licence and equip security contractors earlier in 2008 led to the increased availability of security forces in southern Afghanistan. Canada formulated a complex process to vet these companies so that they could be used to relieve Canadian and Afghan troops from security duties at the larger forward operating bases and free up more manoeuvre forces. TF Kandahar hired 200 security contractors to handle security at the JPCC, FOB Frontenac, the PRT, Patrol Base Wilson and FOB Hutal in Maywand. FOB Ma'Sum Ghar was next on the list.[186]

The amount of money that went into the Afghan economy as a result of the licensing and equipping process (not to mention the stimulation of the Afghan life insurance industry) was significant. As a result, numerous entities in the Kandahar power structure wanted in on the action. This included some government leaders, police commanders and the men loyal to them. The line between police, militia, and security contracting continued to lose its definition in some areas. If a government official or a security official owned a security company employing off-duty police from a single tribal group, was this a militia or not? And, given the Afghan predilection toward commercial violence as a dispute resolution mechanism, how were the Canadians to delineate between commercial violence, insurgent violence and inter-tribal violence?

This change simplified Canada's operations in some areas but complicated them in others. For example, the Kandahar power structure sought to consolidate all private security not only to make significant amounts of money, but also to edge out tribal competitors and to create a parallel power alternative security force that reported to tribal interests instead of national ones. It was not clear to TF Kandahar that there would be longer-term ramifications for Canadian interests in Kandahar.[187] They were focused on increasing available manpower and were not looking at the larger problem of the development of a private army that was not under legitimate control. It was a *de facto* reversal of the original intent of the DIAG programme (see Volume I), but with the analytical focus on the insurgency, little attention was paid to this growing issue at the time.

Operations in Arghandab and Lower Shah Wali Kot, May–June 2008

LCol Corbould was concerned about the situation in Zharey and Panjwayi. B Company had been under significant contact and needed relief, while C Company was under less pressure in lower Shah Wali Kot and Arghandab at this time. As a result, the decision was made to pull Recce Squadron out of Spin Boldak and move it up to FOB Frontenac as an economy of effort measure.[188]

Maj Boivin and Recce Squadron made their way to FOB Frontenac, where they set out to define the situation as best they could. They were hampered by the fact that there was no district equivalent to Col. Raziq, nor was there any organized police force on par with the Afghan Border Police in Spin Boldak. When they were able to move about, Recce Squadron rapidly came to the conclusion that upper Shah Wali Kot was a write-off: only the KAU mercenaries could handle the Tarinkot Road, and they shot at everything that came anywhere near them as they were escorting convoys to and from Oruzgan. Khakrez was a complete write-off as well: it served as an insurgent bed-down and transit area to connect Zharey and Panjwayi operations with Oruzgan and Helmand, and as a support structure for operations in Arghandab. Arghandab was itself increasingly problematic because of the divisions within the Alikozai over Naqib's replacement.[189]

Recce Squadron operations fulfilled yet another economy of effort task. The Canadians could define the area of operation, and maybe stabilize certain communities, but there were not enough ANSF working together in the area to have a significant security effect across the district. And, as a result, any development was problematic. Maj Boivin focused on the hills west of FOB Frontenac on the seam between Arghandab and Shah Wali Kot. A ratline connected all three districts and then moved on into the infamous District 9 in the "cone" of Kandahar City (see Figure 3-9). As soon as Recce Squadron and the Afghan police put patrols into this seam, they were hit with IED after IED. Lacking forces to generate a significant disruptive presence, Recce Squadron did what it could to keep the lines of communication open between FOB Frontenac, upper Arghandab and Kandahar City.[190]

Questions over the Centrality of Kandahar City

It was well known that there were enemy terrorist cells in the city: usually, they operated from the northern and southwestern districts. And, as we have already seen in previous chapters, there was a security plan for the city that was police-centric and supported by the PRT (Operation PORTCULLIS), and there were occasional coalition operations to go after the cells, which was also subject to the principle of police primacy. BGen Thompson's headquarters was comfortable with this state of affairs. While the staff developed its assessment, the Lessard-led Regional Command (South) headquarters expressed concerns internally that all was not well in Kandahar City. The Regional Command (South) staff

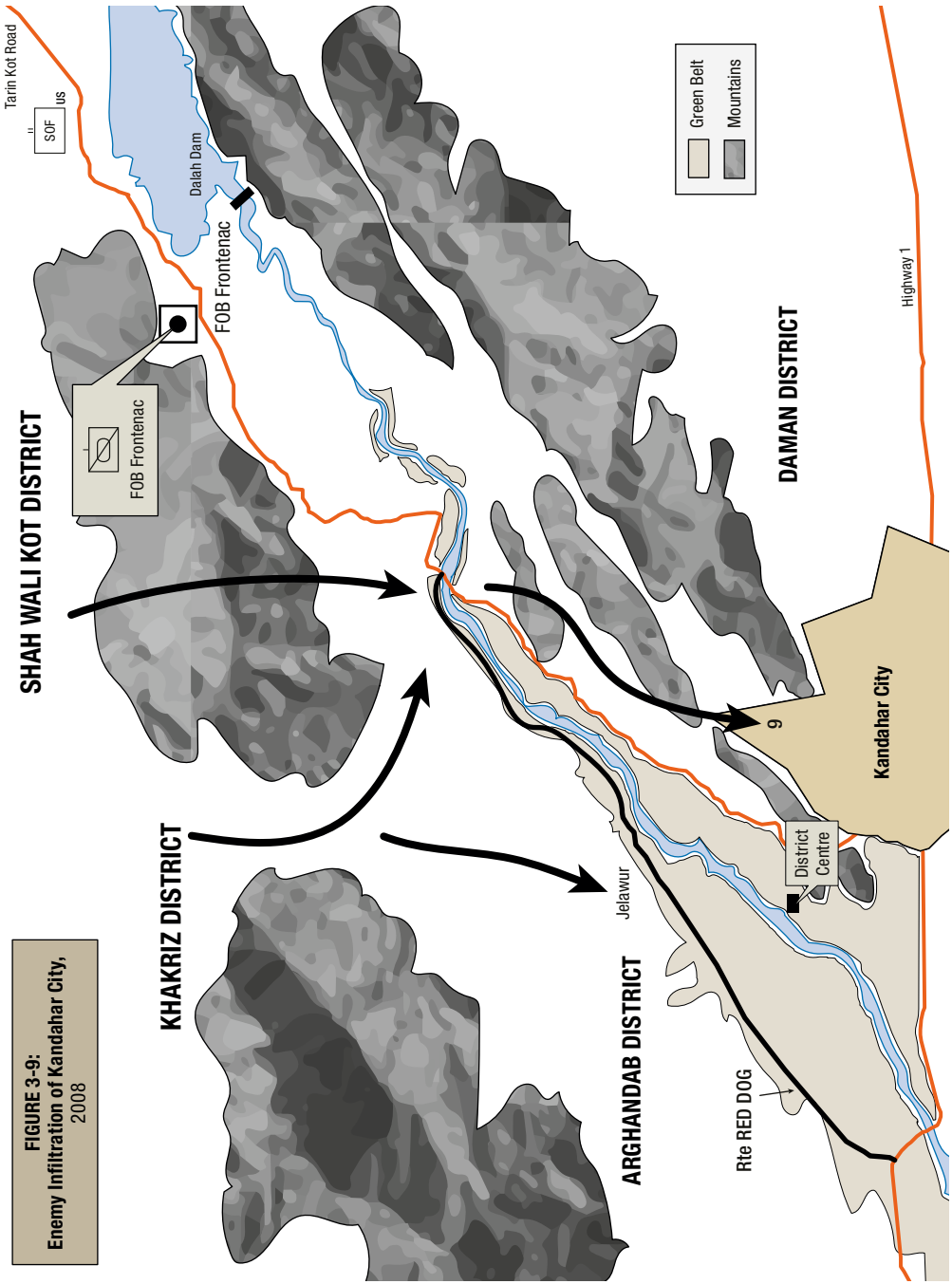


Figure 3-9: Enemy Infiltration of Kandahar City, 2008

were increasingly concerned about the destabilization of Arghandab District. It was noted that "there is evidence that the leadership in Kabul views the cohesion and strength of the Alikozai as a threat and is attempting to undermine Alikozai dominance…were either an internal Alikozai rift to develop or were the Alikozai to turn against the current government, then Taleban [sic] intent to dominate Kandahar City would be much closer to becoming reality."[191] Citing data that indicated a serious downward turn in governmental support in the city itself, the study noted that there was "open hatred of the Provincial Governor, in reports that that some families are already leaving the city and reports of Alikozai dissatisfaction at their treatment at the hands of the Karzai government and, in particular, the President's immediate family,"[192] that is, Ahmad Wali Karzai.

Regional Command (South) wanted better information, up-to-date atmospherics, better and more policing as a priority effort, and a complete study of the power structure. This had to be linked with ISAF headquarters and its ability to apply pressure in Kabul: "[We need] to take action now…we need to apply robust mentoring…in order to stop the corruption spiraling out of control. This will include the selective removal of certain individuals and moves to block the influence of others, including local power brokers." Regional Command (South) concluded that the effort could lose a province like Helmand but "If we and GIRoA lose Kandahar, we have lost."[193]

BGen Thompson did not agree. There was some skepticism on the Alikozai situation because of the primary sources of information on that issue. Thompson believed all was being done that could be done on the policing front for the time being. As for dealing with the Kandahar power structure, Thompson noted rhetorically, "Are we kingmakers now?" And, as for Helmand versus Kandahar priorities, the TF Kandahar commander countered by asking "Why are all the assets in Helmand and Zabul?" Finally, he disagreed with the assertion made by Regional Command (South) planners that "knowledge and understanding of [Kandahar City] is pitifully small." In effect, BGen Thompson's headquarters believed that Kandahar City remained "self-securing" and focused its limited resources elsewhere in the districts. The headquarters retained a non-interventionist view when it came to Kandahari power politics.[194] "Better the devil you know" remained the policy, as it had since BGen David Fraser in 2006.

The Panjwayi East Combined Operations Centre, Home of the WHOPPER: Panjwayi District, May–June 2008

LCol David Corbould and his staff realized, after two months of operations, that Panjwayi District was just too large for an infantry company to cover, especially one that was trapped in the tactical infrastructure. The decision was made to create sub-areas of operation: Panjwayi West under B Company, and Panjwayi East, under B Squadron.

Again, with the passage of time, both organizations understood that greater synergy was required to deal with the plethora of problems in Panjwayi. The Joint District Coordination Centre was positioned at FOB Ma'Sum Ghar: it belonged to the OMLT and the P-OMLT fed information into it. There were unlimited opportunities to gain momentum at the district level, but the main obstacle was that the PRT was unwilling to deploy DFAIT and CIDA representatives on a full-time basis to Panjwayi. Sporadic monthly visits were not enough. Another inconvenient truth that emerged was this: what does a diplomat know about municipal politics and services delivery? The idea of the Whole of Government Panjwayi Programme for Enhanced Revitalization (or Reconstruction) (WHOPPER) emerged. This was the tongue- in-cheek name for informal means to coordinate all Canadian and Afghan activities in the district, with B Squadron in the lead manning the Panjwayi East Combined Operations Centre.[195] The WHOPPER's constituent elements included all of the Canadian organizations operating in the district, but most importantly, the Joint District Coordination Centre, the P-OMLT, B Squadron and CIMIC.

The WHOPPER was necessary because of the deterioration in relationship between the forces deployed in Panjwayi on one hand, and the PRT's OGDs and Representative of Canada in Kandahar on the other. The Panjwayi shura was active, but split into two factions, led by two men: Haji Baran and Haji Agha Lalai Dastagiri. The community councils were not working. The District Development Assembly was trying, but the Dastagiri faction subverted it. CIDA's plans to get the Central Asian Development Group to act as an arms-length "implementing partner" were not working. As a result, the National Solidarity Programme was failing in the district. Then the PRT turned off all project funding for three months until corruption could be identified and rooted out. The WHOPPER was able to get CIMIC to help out with some quick impact projects, but the rest of the planned projects were not happening. There was a "shopping list" that was partly underway when the funding was cut off: a medical clinic, a grape co-op, a sanitation department, and electrification. The members of the WHOPPER were, in their words, "snubbed" by the PRT's OGDs and told that the Representative of Canada had established Kandahar City and the Dahla Dam as priorities, not Panjwayi.[196]

Indeed, CIMIC reporting to the PRT reinforced the belief that development was problematic in the district:

> The full extent of the lack of coordination between the DDA and the district shura is now evident [to CIMIC]. Over the past three months the relationships between DDA, District Shura and the people of Panjwayi are now apparent. The DDA has not once in over three months, met in any form of shura. [CIMIC] has yet to see any evidence that any active

> CDCs exist….DL Haji Baran and Shura Secretary Haji Fazil Mohammad are unaware of how the DDA and CDCs operate, when or where they meet, what initiatives they are involved in or any projects they are undertaking.[197]

This left the WHOPPER members with no leverage, and significantly decreased credibility with the population and its erratic leadership. The UN would not deal with Baran as he was only an acting district leader in that he did not meet literacy requirements established by government criteria. There were constant grievances against Baran et al. with local accusations that humanitarian aid was diverted from their intended recipients.[198] By June, there was a complete breakdown in governance: "the District Development Assembly, Shura Secretary, and two other shura members are on strike and not doing their jobs until the issue of leadership is resolved."[199] Where was the Governor? Where were the governance experts from the PRT? Why were a tank squadron commander, a captain from the P-OMLT, and a major in the Joint District Coordination Centre left to broker this complex state of affairs?

B Squadron did not relinquish its other responsibilities, however. The FOB "battleship," "HMCS *Ma'Sum Ghar*," still regularly engaged enemy rocketeers and mortar-men in Operations Box ELTON[200] with the Leopards from the run-up positions, and still deployed QRFs and protected combat engineer road remediation teams when they filled in IED craters. And then there were the "River Runs," better known as Operation ROOM SERVICE, and later called Operation MUTAFIQ TANDER when ISTAR resources were superimposed on it watching for enemy targets (see below). (See Figure 3-10).

The dominating issue at this time was how to rationalize the Canadian battle group, Afghan army and Canadian mentors, and Afghan police and their Canadian and American mentors to provide better security in Panjwayi District. The inertia generated by the confusing number of organizations generated paralysis whenever this matter was raised. The WHOPPER became one mechanism but for the most part, progress was slow throughout May. Boiled down, the Afghan army did not want to occupy security checkpoints: they wanted to patrol and conduct mobile operations against the enemy. The police were still being "Focused District Developed" and the ANCOP did not want to be considered light infantry.

One partial solution was Operation TOORA AZADI II, conducted 13 May. The Strong Point Mushan company was scheduled to rotate out, and 1st Company from 1st Kandak would go in. Two platoons from Weapons Company, 1st Kandak, would take over from the police in PSSs Haji and Talukan. The police would remain in Zangabad for the time being. B Squadron led the operation with a breaching team consisting of two

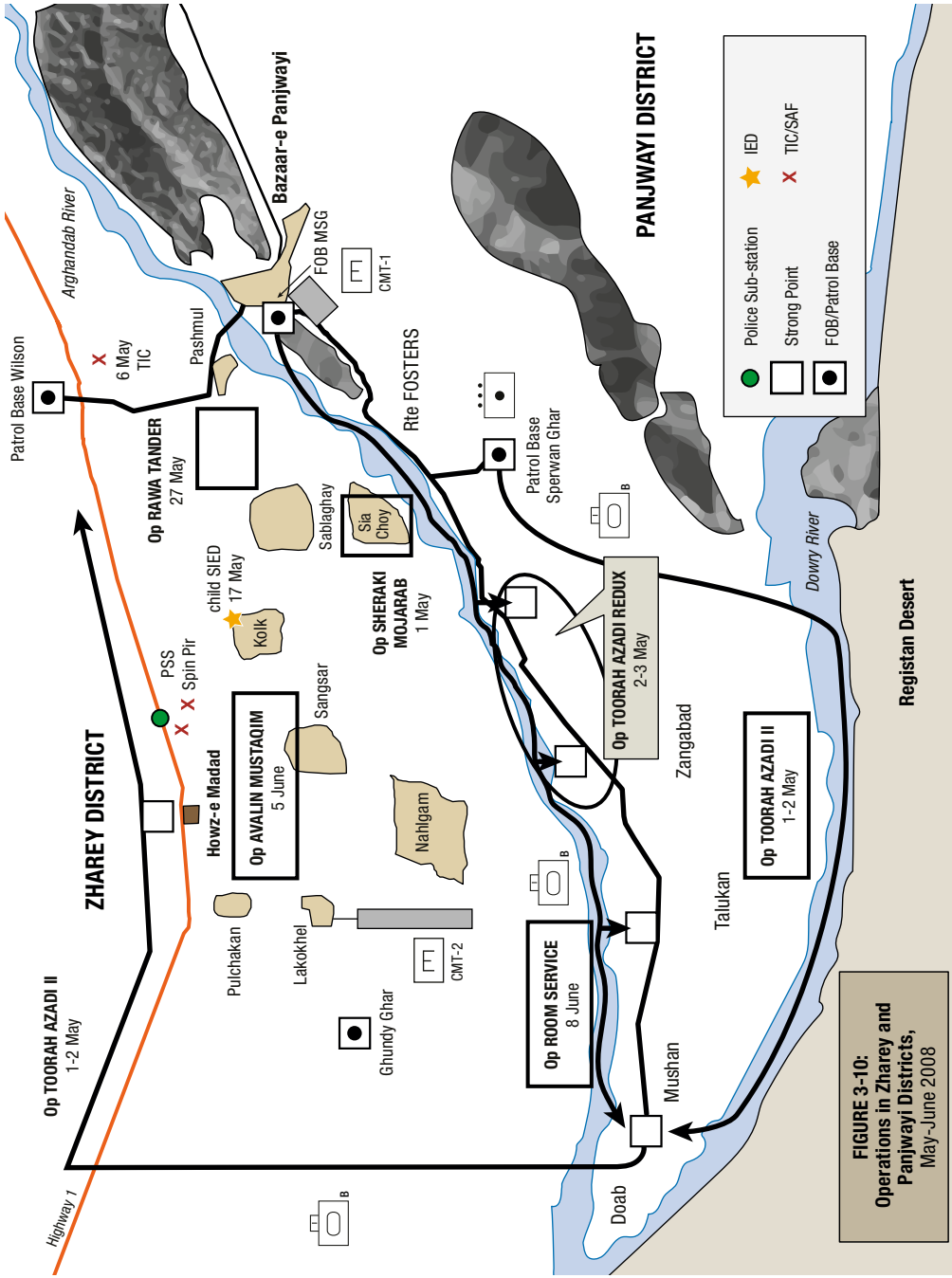


Figure 3-10: Operations in Zharey and Panjwayi Districts, May-June 2008

roller-equipped Leopard C2s, a Badger AEV and an engineer section leading a column down the Arghandab riverbed. Behind them were four "RIP Teams," one for each strong point or sub-station. The Breach Team would move in, while the RIP Team would relieve its forces, and so on. B Squadron Combat Team leaguered next to Mushan, resupplied the position, conducted repairs on LAV III and a Leopard, and then moved south to the Dori riverbed, west to the junction of Maywand, Zharey and Panjwayi, north through the Dasht to Highway 1, and back to Ma'Sum Ghar. There were two IED strikes, with some wounded taken by the EROC engineers, but no contact.[201]

However, the Afghan police refused to occupy Zangabad citing equipment deficiencies. At the same time, 1st Kandak did not want to occupy the Three Tank Hill position south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi. With the Focused District Development in progress and the previous problems with the district leader and the chief of police, there were simply not enough police to handle anything west of Sperwan Ghar. 1st Kandak abandoned Three Tank Hill and were replaced with six policemen. In addition, enemy pressure on the population in Talukan meant that the Afghan troops there could not buy bread at the bazaar. With the poor state of the Afghan logistics system, the Canadian mentors had to dive in and pay for food themselves.[202]

To address all of these issues, the battle group and the OMLT planned Operation TOORAH AZADI REDUX. This operation was designed to remove all remaining police in western Panjwayi, and convert the police sub-stations into combat outposts manned by the Afghan army and Canadian mentors in the way Strong Point Mushan was. Departing on 23 May, B Squadron Combat Team moved down to PSSs Haji and Zangabad, breached in, replaced the police in Haji with a Canadian section, and moved an Afghan platoon to Zangabad. All positions were resupplied with food. B Squadron was covered by OH-58D Warrior helicopters provided by the Banshees on this operation. When the ground force came under contact, the helicopters were able to spot for the Leopard tanks, which then engaged the RPG and PKM teams with 105mm fire. The ground convoy returned to Ma'Sum Ghar without further incident.[203]

In mid-May, the Panjwayi security shura learned from local elders that they were concerned about new enemy activity in the area between Bazaar-e Panjwayi and Nakhonay. They wanted more checkpoints along Routes Fosters East and Lake Effect and possibly an Afghan army strong point near Nakhonay. Haji Baran concurred that something was going on in that area but he believed it needed better definition.[204] As a result, Capt Sheldon Maerz from the P-OMLT, and the police increased patrolling in the bazaar and on Fosters East. In early June, they uncovered emplaced IEDs north of Salavat near the Salehan checkpoint. By this point, more Focused District Development police were back from the Regional Training Center in Herat and, being better trained, were more inclined toward joint patrols

with the Afghan army. The Joint District Coordination Centre, by this time, was in a better position to handle the intake of information from the population. The result was more and better patrolling in eastern Panjwayi, which produced better information. As it turned out, there was a significant increase in enemy activity in the area that had gone undetected.[205]

After the Sarposa prison break in June, Haji Baran and other leaders in the security shura "expressed great apprehension at the state of security in Panjwayi District…from the comments of the local nationals something must be done about Nakhonay."[206] Haji Baran pleaded with Canadian CIMIC teams: "Please do something. We need an operation in the Nakhonay area."[207] Eastern Panjwayi was heating up, and this also affected the otherwise quiet Dand District.

Panjwayi West was a different story, almost a different war. Operation ROOM SERVICE/MUTAFIQ TANDAR had B Squadron Combat Team resupplying Strong Point Mushan and the combat outposts along Fosters West on 8 June. The operation was similar to TOORA AZADI II in its execution, except this time a Leopard was IED'd near Talukan and another's rollers detonated a mine. Searches uncovered more IEDs in the potential breach areas, while OH-58D Warrior helicopters engaged a fleeting enemy target.[208]

According to Maj Lane, OC B Company, "At the end of spring, it was like switch was turned on. We went from limited TICs to 'Boom! There's a war on!'"[209] The manpower situation in Panjwayi was so bad, and the situation so irrational, that the decision was made to deploy B Company into Talukan, Zangabad and Haji. By summer, the Canadian platoons occupying the former police sub-stations (now renamed combat outposts or COPs) along Route Fosters had to be resupplied regularly and, without Canadian helicopters, this proved to be problematic. Each platoon settled in to what amounted to separate mini-wars that, to them, appeared unconnected to the larger fight. It was hot, dangerous work conducting dismounted patrols and interacting with the population.

For example, the platoon in COP Zangabad, led by Lt Reg McMichael, learned that there were heavily armed local criminal elements that overlapped or facilitated local Taliban fighters, as well as out-of-area fighters. The out-of-area fighters sometimes had their own "OMLT" of experienced Afghan or non-Afghan fighters. On one occasion, a pair of enemy leaders were heard conversing in Russian, which suggested a Chechen presence, while other out-of-area fighters spoke Pakistani-accented English. Enemy leaders in the area ensured they were unarmed and accompanied by children everywhere they went.[210]

The population around Zangabad was cowed by the presence of all four types of enemy, but recalled the days of 2006 when the Taliban and their allies were "mowed down at Sperwan Ghar." Once the Canadian platoon exerted its admittedly tenuous presence and publicly demonstrated that they would not be psychologically intimidated by the local

leadership, however, and information flowed in on enemy movements and activities. Indeed, one criminally oriented facilitator changed sides once he saw that the Canadians were not leaving, and became an informant.[211]

Maj Lane made the case in retrospect that this was guerilla war, not counter-insurgency: "There was NO development piece, no reconstruction. The environment was not conducive for that. We could not get local empowerment going [west of Sperwan Ghar]."[212] Occasionally, B Company was directed to patrol across the river into Sia Choy with 2nd Company, 1st Kandak and Canadian mentors in order to generate enemy "chatter" and help define their locations. On 2 June, this force crossed the Arghandab and was in immediate contact with an insurgent force firing from four different locations. With limited fire support and declining UAV support as the day went on, the force eventually incurred several casualties from a mine or IED: four Canadians and two Afghans. Sgt Martin Côté, who was concussed, was still able to triage the wounded and command a fighting withdrawal. The enemy reinforced from Burmohammad without resorting to radio communications, further confusing the situation.[213] Capt Richard Leary from B Company was one of the wounded. Cpl Brent Gallant, a medic, covered Leary with his body, while working to keep him alive. Capt Leary died from his wounds. Gallant and Côté were awarded the Medal of Military Valour for their actions.

Zharey District Operations, May–June 2008

TF Zharey, with its eclectic mix of kandaks, OMLTs, P-OMLTs and other supporters, continued their operations into May. Operation SHERAKI MOJARAB swept into Sia Choy on the morning of 1 May. The Afghan army and OMLT mentors cordoned off the community, while Afghan Uniformed Police (as the Afghan National Police were renamed) and their P-OMLT, American police mentors and the National Directorate of Security processed 160 people. Five were identified as insurgents and detained. No shots were fired and the artillery on call was not needed.[214] (See Figure 3-10.)

Patrols continued to push out from Pulchakan and some CIMIC projects were conducted in the Howz-e Madad bazaar. A major shura held with the district leader resulted in an agreement to establish two police stations: one in Senjaray and another in Makuan. CIMIC teams from the PRT continued with their assessments, but on 6 May a CIMIC team was engaged with small-arms fire and an RPG. They returned fire, and the enemy seemed to quit the area. However, when the QRF from Patrol Base Wilson arrived, it was engaged with an intense volume of fire from three sides: south, southwest and southeast. The PRT patrol, led by WO David Schultz, manoeuvred and shot their way out of the trap, while MCpl Paul Rachynski and Cpl Anthony Rotondi provided covering fire and medical aid

to the wounded. Both were awarded the Medal of Military Valour for their actions, while WO Shultz received the Star of Military Valour. The forces broke out and recovered to Patrol Base Wilson. Cpl Michael Starker, a medic with the PRT, died from his wounds.[215]

CIMIC was having problems making headway in Zharey. When CMT-2 set out to hire local people to work on Route Langley, local leaders were unable to get enough people interested. With the district leader taking leave for most of May and the deputy district leader being next to useless, TF Zharey noted that "the absence of the whole-of-government representatives in FOB Wilson is significantly restricting the implementation of a multi-dimensional Secure-Hold-Build strategy to stabilization in Zharey."[216] By complete coincidence, the Clerk of the Privy Council, Kevin Lynch, visited FOB Wilson two days later, where the team vented about the OGDs not wanting to come out to where they were needed: "The current deficiencies in terms of tangible whole-of-government effects in Zharey was identified in detail." Three days after that, UNAMA, DFAIT and CIDA representatives from the PRT arrived at FOB Wilson to have preliminary discussions on formulating a district development plan.[217]

Maj Bob Ritchie wanted to

> create a discernable tear line between the people that you work with around the police sub-stations because they enjoy greater security and, as a result, development and governance opportunities. You progressively expand the goodwill, you get trusted actors inside your bubble, when they're starting to inform your security operations through intelligence and progressively the ink dots expand to the point where you have autonomy in greater areas. The problem was, as the insurgents came in we didn't get to a whole bunch of these ambitious objectives because we were trying to prosecute operations.[218]

The Kolk area generated problems, especially after the police abandoned the sub-station there. On 17 May, 17 Canadians (OMLT, PSYOPS, and a JTAC team), 16 Afghan army soldiers and three interpreters moved into the Kolk area for a series of patrols in order to reassert presence. A 12-year old boy, led by an older man, walked up to the patrol. The man took his leave and the boy detonated the bomb he was carrying. An Afghan soldier was killed outright and two Canadians and another Afghan soldier were wounded.[219] This shocking event went unrecognized by Canadian critics of the Afghan mission, who continued to direct their attention at detainee issues.

TF Kandahar tried to focus on the Route Langley paving project. The idea of connecting Highway 1 with Mushan in Panjwayi District encountered geographical reality. 2nd Kandak conducted Operation ARAM OKAB [Silent Eagle] to clear an area near Abdullahkhan

and establish a new strong point. When the Canadian engineers arrived, they found they could not construct the base because of a high water table. Furthermore, Route Langley was not assessed "as being capable" of supporting heavy equipment. Ten vehicles got bogged during the course of ARAM OKAB.[220] Combined with the inability to get local buy-in, which, in turn, was related to security issues and intimidation, CMT-2 was forced to throw in the towel. The Langley paving project was shelved.[221]

The enemy were increasingly drawn to Spin Pir, now nicknamed "Spin TIC," where they mounted more and more ambushes against traffic on Highway 1. They got more than they bargained for. On 28 May, OMLT mentors were ambushed with small arms and RPG fire. Two CIMIC teams and two infantry platoons mounted in LAV III responded and piled on, pouring fire into the insurgent's positions to the south of the road. A Banshee OH-58D helicopter came on station and emptied its rocket pod and .50-calibre machine gun at the enemy. M-777s fired a smoke mission and the Canadians extricated from the site.[222]

Regional Command (South)'s ongoing concerns over Highway 1 and IEDs led to the implementation of Operation ARAM TANDER [Silver Thunder] in mid-May. Higher-level ISTAR and special operations resources were cut to Regional Command (South) with the aim of targeting the IED networks operating in Zharey and Panjwayi. Working with the ASIC, the concept of operations was to superimpose these forces on top of existing operations to identify the IED portion and, if it could be sifted out, strike the IED makers with special operations forces. At the same time, TF Kandahar and the battle group used collateral data on enemy commanders to target them using their resources.[223] The upcoming Operation RAWA TANDER [Constant Thunder] was conducted under the framework of ARAM TANDER.

A new kandak was in town by the end of the month, with 3rd Kandak replacing 2nd Kandak. The new organization retained the existing laydown: companies at Howz-e Madad, FOB Wilson and Pulchakan and a platoon at Ghundy Ghar. The relief in place was completed just in time for Operation RAWA TANDER.

By this point, BGen Thompson wanted out of FOB Frontenac and wanted increased battle group operations in Zharey District (see below). In order to define the enemy presence that might threaten planned development objectives in the Pashmul area, C Company and an Afghan company from 1st Kandak launched a one-day operation called RAWA TANDER into the Burmohammad area.[224] In the regrouping leading up to RAWA TANDER, however, Maj Grubb's vehicle was hit with a suicide vehicle-borne IED on its way through Kandahar City. Four Canadians were wounded, including Maj Grubb.[225]

One of C Company's platoons and 3rd Company, with its mentors, made their way west toward Burmohammad from Route Summit after 0600 hours on 27 May. A section of insurgents fired from a concealed position but was supressed with 25mm fire as Predator and Reaper missiles were brought to bear. This situation repeated itself two more times on

the way in. They cleared two objective compounds, dubbed MEADOWS and LARKHILL. The next day, another C Company platoon, this time with 2nd Company and its mentors, deployed dismounted from FOB Wilson into Objective WAVERLY. There they encountered sporadic small-arms fire followed by RPGs in five separate encounters. The enemy used "shoot and scoot" tactics and disappeared, while at the same time, ISTAR resources observed the enemy reinforcing. An OH-58D Warrior helicopter covering the western flank caught an insurgent PKM machine gun team mounted on motorcycles in the open as it moved to reinforce. An estimated seven enemy were killed.[226]

The next day, the Canadian and Afghan companies regrouped to FOB Ma'Sum Ghar. Recce Platoon led the dismounted forces into Objectives WESTMAN and PARKDALE, after crossing the Arghandab from Operation MOSQUE, around 0400 hours. A four-man 82mm recoilless rifle team opened up from PARKDALE, but it was eliminated by close air support. Again, two more groups of enemy fighters equipped with small arms and RPGs opened up on C Company's platoons, prompting a response in the form of a pair of Hellfire missiles from orbiting UAVs and from M-777 artillery. These engagements yielded an estimated 18 enemy wounded and 18 enemy killed, one of whom was a Taliban commander. The actions were over by 1430 and the enemy fled the area. The lack of water, combined with the heat, made pursuit impossible, but IED factories were found in Objective WESTMAN. The forces returned to their respective bases.[227] ISTAR reportage suggested that "The insurgents' determination to hold the Pashmul defensive area [near] Mollyan Burmohammad is clear. Despite losses incurred in this morning's engagements with the battle group, insurgent command and control remains robust and the insurgents are eager to fight."[228]

The ASIC assessed that Taliban commander Kaka Abdul Khaliq was back in Pashmul and that one of his associates, Mullah Abdul Razzaq, brought fighters from Waziristan with him to the fight. These external fighters had problems navigating in Zharey, which increased their vulnerability to coalition close air support.[229] From the information derived by ARAM TANDER via RAWA TANDER, the ASIC was able to define the Razzaq Network located in the Pashmul area, and how it connected to the other cells in Zharey and Panjwayi. Haji Salim, the Taliban commander for Panjwayi District, was identified and killed on 3 June, for example, because of his connections to the Razzaq Network, while others like Sadiq Agha (the overall Zharey and Panjwayi operational commander), Khan Agha (the Zharey and Panjwayi IED facilitator) and Jabar Agha (the IED commander for Kandahar City and environs) were identified and tracked.[230]

The events of 3 and 4 June gave everybody dealing with Zharey District some pause. On 3 June, a small enemy force ambushed an Afghan patrol and Canadian mentors. As the patrol went to ground, they found that the cover was booby-trapped with IEDs. One of

these detonated, seriously wounding four Afghan soldiers. Sgt Joe Côté, suffering a severe concussion, initiated first aid on the wounded. The patrol was unable to fall back, so Sgt Côté continued to work on the wounded as the firefight went on around him. Eventually, the patrol leadership mounted a fighting withdrawal and Sgt Côté continued to treat the wounded as they pulled back under fire. He was awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.

3rd Kandak decided to mount Operation AVALIN MUSTAQIM [First Strike], a clearance patrol from Howz-e Madad to the Sangsar area, using 3rd Company and Canadian mentors. Just as the force crossed its line of departure, it was in immediate contact southeast of the strong point while in virtually open ground. The kandak executive officer was unable to react or lead effectively, and then the company started taking fire from the northeast, east, south and southeastern quadrants from all available enemy weapons systems, from mortars to recoilless rifles. Canadian mentors noticed that the enemy were using single shots and producing disciplined, "intense, effective fire." Afghan casualties started to mount. Capt Jon Snyder took command, ordered the Afghan troops to recover the wounded, called in medical evacuation, and planned an extraction. Cpl J.D. Ball took two men to find a way through the terrain to extract the force, while Capt Robert Peel, Cpl Carey Baker and Cpl Steven Bancarz led the fighting withdrawal along Ball's route. All were later awarded the Medal of Military Valour for saving 3rd Company. This action was supported by Weapons Company at the strong point and OH-58D Warrior helicopters came on station and covered the medical evacuation with .50-calibre machine gun fire. When all was said and done, "[the] insurgents have assumed control of a significant piece of ground since the [closure of SP Sangsar and PSS Kolk]. Their freedom of movement is immense and their level of coordination is disturbingly effective as is the proficiency of the use of weaponry."[231]

The Canadians and Afghans continued with patrols into Zharey but they had to be backed up with more and more firepower "on tap." Night patrolling was increased to keep the enemy off balance as much as possible. Unfortunately, Capt Jon Snyder, the man who so valiantly inspired the Afghan soldiers and led their extrication during Operation AVALIN MUSTAQIM, stepped into a deep *karez* [well] during a night patrol and, after heroic measures were taken to extricate him, he died on 7 June.

The Tactical Deep Fight and the Kandahar Airfield Cigar Club

As we have already seen, informal relationships between American UAV units and Canadian units existed dating back to TF Orion in 2006, when improvised means were used to have Canadian forward observation officers call in "drops" of Hellfire missiles for specific precision targets. By 2007, Canadian and American UAVs were used interchangeably for surveillance purposes in the Kandahar Province. By late 2007, armed American UAVs

were working in concert with TF Kandahar to observe and kill enemy IED "dig teams." An informal relationship between the U.S. Air Force's 451st Air Expeditionary Group (AEG) and the Laroche headquarters was strengthened further with the January arrival of Col. Trey Turner, U.S. Air Force. Working with the Canadian battle group, the 451st AEG facilitated the battle group Tactical Operations Centre's control of 33 MQ-9 Reaper and five MQ-1 Predator strikes from January to June 2008. This amounted to 50% of the MQ-1/MQ-9 strikes conducted throughout Afghanistan during that time.[232]

Col. Turner directed that any "residual Pred time" be handed over to the battle group for use in the Canadian area of operations. There were several reasons for this. First, Col. Turner wanted to get into the fight and the fight was in Kandahar. Second, technical limitations meant that many UAV operations were restricted to line-of-sight missions controlled from Kandahar. The Canadian area of operation was within this radius. Third, until BGen Thompson arrived in May and reorganized things, 2 PPCLI Battle Group was "trapped in the TI" and had no ability to manoeuvre beyond their positions.[233]

It was this last point that caught LCol Corbould and his operations officer, Maj Jay Adair. 2 PPCLI Battle Group had to have the ability to surreptitiously observe and strike in areas where they could not be present. The Sperwer TUAV could observe but strike resources, that is, "fast air" close air support or aviation (helicopters), were not necessarily available when they needed to be. Out of these considerations emerged what was called the "Tactical Deep Fight" (the previous rotation called it "Deep Battle").[234] Col. Turner had a fibre optic cable installed to the 2 PPCLI Battle Group Tactical Operations Centre to provide "feed," while Maj Adair worked with Maj Louis Hamel, an Air Command CF-18 pilot turned joint terminal air controller to establish tactics, techniques and procedures.[235]

Plundering special operations methodology, the battle group developed tactics like flying in jets or helicopters, to make a lot of noise, hoping the enemy would go to ground. Then an MQ-9 Reaper would come on station, orbiting above with no noise signature, but keeping the "unblinking eye" focused on where the enemy were located. Once the jets and helicopters were gone, the enemy would emerge. Once positive identification was made, they were engaged with the MQ-9's weapons. On other operations, the UAVs observed and "removed" enemy early warning sentries before ground operations took place to give the battle group additional surprise. Such operations could be conducted day or night, usually in Zharey and Panjwayi, in areas that could not be occupied or patrolled by coalition ground forces. Strict procedures were established, in consultation with the battle group legal advisor, to avoid killing civilians. The Commanding Officer, LCol Corbould, or the Deputy Commanding Officer, Maj Stephen Joudrey, had the authority to "drop." The motto for Tactical Deep Fight team in the operations centre became "We can never be wrong."[236]

Photo Credit: Author

The lack of an armed Canadian UAV forced Task Force Kandahar to develop informal relationships with American UAV units. In many cases, American MQ-1 Predators returning from operations still loaded with weapons were handed off to the battle group or Task Force Kandahar forward air controllers to engage targets of opportunity.

It is impossible to depict every Tactical Deep Fight strike in this narrative. From March to September 2008, 2 PPCLI Battle Group conducted 93 strikes, killing a confirmed 400 insurgents, with no civilian casualties.[237] The bulk of these strikes occurred in Zharey and Panjwayi Districts. There were several effects of the Tactical Deep Fight. First, it gave the battle group momentum while they were "trapped in the TI." The battle group was able to inflict serious casualties on the insurgents in a low-risk high-payoff environment, which degraded their ability to conduct anything like the larger 2006-style operations. By fall 2008, the enemy were intimidated enough not to move around in groups of more than five, and they knew enough to conceal their weapons in blankets and other items to prevent positive identification and destruction. The attrition of available insurgents generally reduced their ability to sustain activity in both districts, and probably drew off heat that would have otherwise been applied to the vulnerable tactical infrastructure situation.

Of crucial importance was the undermining of the enemy command structure through the constant, focused attrition of their leaders. Normally, this was a special operations forces bailiwick. The idea of killing the enemy's most experienced leaders so that a generation of less experienced, mistake-prone leaders would take over and then be more easily killed was not new in Afghanistan. However, TF Kandahar now had the ability to undertake

Photo Credit: Author

The success of the informal Canadian-American UAV relationship at Kandahar Airfield led to more formalized cooperation. MQ-9 Reapers like this one, equipped with 500-pound bombs and Hellfire missiles, regularly supported Canadian ground operations. The U.S. Army Warrior Alpha, their version of the Reaper, was used in the identification and destruction of enemy improvised explosive device emplacement teams targeting Canadian forces.

a similar process in its area of operations without being burdened with the coordination issues that existed between ISAF and the non-ISAF special operations forces. In time, the ASIC wanted to use the new process to target extremely troublesome insurgent leaders. The issue at the time was, to what extent was this different from taking out regular insurgents in the battle space that the battle group could not get into? Then the TF Kandahar Provincial Operations Centre wanted to control the process and connect it to Operation ARAM TANDER, the intelligence-cued anti-IED effort. There were many unanswered questions by summer 2008 on matters of control and coordination.

The Tactical Deep Fight system, as established in early 2008, was, however, personality-dependent and informal. In time, the U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates took notice and sent a study team to examine what 2 PPCLI Battle Group and 451st AEG were doing, and ultimately gave his retroactive blessing to the whole set-up. In the interim, however, the informal relationship was sustained partially through the KAF Cigar Club, a gathering of Canadian and American cigar aficionados who met weekly. Col. Turner's successor, Col Ted "Oz" Ozowski, was a member, as was the TF Kandahar deputy commander, Col Jamie Cade, among other notables. In addition to the Tactical Deep Fight, a wide variety of other Canadian and American matters requiring deconfliction were discussed informally in this venue, to everyone's mutual benefit.[238]

Stability Boxes

Stalled out in other areas by late May, BGen Thompson sought means and ways of remaining engaged in the fight and regaining initiative on the stalemated reconstruction and development front.[239] Recall that the Laroche headquarters identified "bubbles of stability" and sought means of securing them late in their tour (Operation SHNA DARA). This concept was not fully adopted, in part due to lack of OGD input, and in part due to the timing of the relief in place at the PRT, as LCol Chamberlain departed and LCol Woodworth took over. The original SHNA DARA plan had three disconnected operations boxes in Zharey. Looking at the situation, LCol Fraser Auld and the other TF Kandahar planners believed that if they concentrated resources in a single operations box and superimposed that operations box in an area that was geographically and socially critical, they could create positive effects on all three lines of operation: security, governance and development.

The Pashmul area in Zharey District was selected for Operation SHNA DARA II. Senjaray was another possibility, but under Habibullah Jan, it was considered self-securing. "We bore some responsibility for its condition (Operation MEDUSA); we could reach it easily (Route Summit); it was backed by two of our key locations (Wilson and Ma'Sum Ghar); it was a key insurgent node and transit route. In addition, CIMIC could reach it, local contractors were willing to work there (with military security support) and it was reported that the Central Asian Development Group would consider working there."[240]

SHNA DARA II was seen initially as "deepening the HOLD" in Zharey District, but as time went on, it was clear that the Canadians and Afghans did not hold the district. During the course of SHNA DARA II planning, the term "chunking" emerged in the planning cells. Taking the original ADZ strategy, where each district was subjected to Clear-Hold-Build, the planners looked at applying Clear-Hold-Build at the sub-district level. That is, Clear- Hold-Build the district in manageable pieces by applying the resources in "chunks," as opposed to, say, Operation BAAZ TSUKA in 2006, which swept through the entire and assumed clearance while delivering CIMIC (see Volume I). (See Figure 3-11.) The stability box approach was designed for contested areas. The first test would kick off with Operation NOLAI and Operation ISTINGA SANGA.

Operation NOLAI, 14–17 June 2008

The TF Kandahar planners understood that if they were going to get Operation SHNA DARA II off the ground and establish the new police station and Stability Box JUNO, they were going to have to give the enemy pause west of Pashmul. The result was Operation NOLAI [Mongoose], scheduled to go in on 14 June. NOLAI's general outline had Maj Boivin's Recce Squadron establishing observation posts along Highway 1, with ISTAR systems on Gundy Ghar as the first moves. Operation Box KAPYONG, with

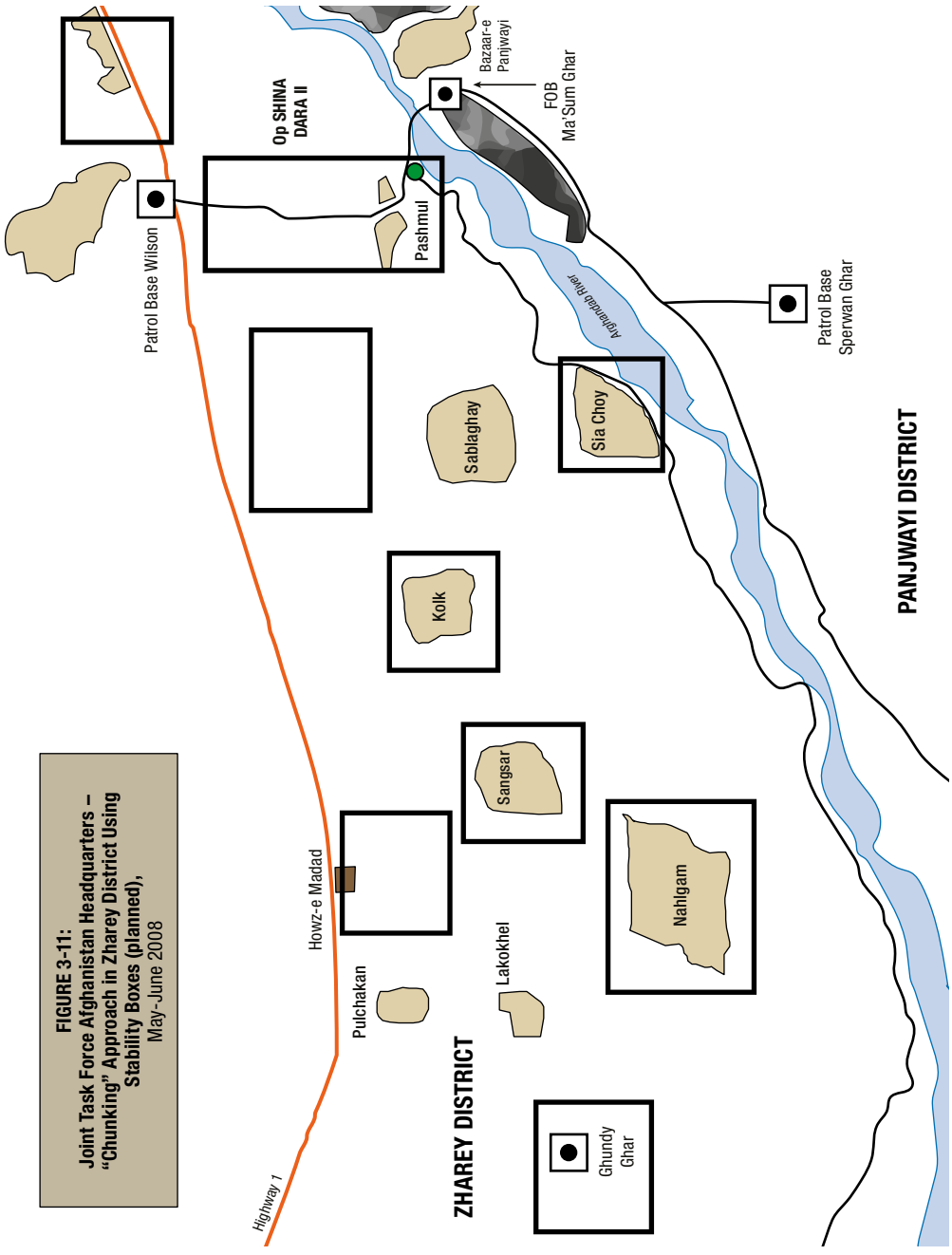


FIGURE 3-11:
Joint Task Force Afghanistan Headquarters – "Chunking" Approach in Zharey District Using Stability Boxes (planned),
May-June 2008

Figure 3-11: Joint Task Force Afghanistan Headquarters – "Chunking" Approach in Zharey District Using Stability Boxes (planned), May-June 2008

the communities between Summit and Sablaghay broken down into objectives B-1 to B-4, was the main objective of this disruption operation (see Figure 3-12). C Company, the main effort, was responsible for them. There would be three feints: the OMLT and 1st Company, 1st Kandak in Mushan would sortie north of the Arghandab River, as would the platoon stationed at PSS Zangabad. B Squadron's Leopards, a platoon from B Company, and 3rd Company from 1st Kandak were another diversion. The intent was to completely overwhelm the enemy's early warning system with too much information. That would, hopefully, get the enemy leaders to unmask and move their reserves, and then identify and engage them. The new police station would be quietly constructed while all this was going on.[241]

Maj Stacey Grubb's C Company, having deposited its LAV IIIs at PSS Pashmul, patrolled through the dark to link up with Capt Steve Davies and his Recce Platoon, who had "eyes on" the objective compounds. At dawn, as Lt Alex Duncan led his platoon into the foliage-enwrapped village, a small number of enemy fighters opened fire with PKM and ran off, leading the Canadians into a 30-man L-shaped ambush at a "T" junction in the village. Sgt Russell Gregoire from Recce Platoon recovered one wounded Canadian, while Sgt Jayson Kapitaniuk, his section split in half on either side of the road, rallied them and got them into positions to respond with fire. Both men were later awarded the Medal of Military Valour for their actions.

Maj Grubb's headquarters also came under contact from insurgents pouring out of grape huts and onto roofs, firing down onto the Canadian platoons that took cover. According to Lt Duncan, "We were there for half an hour trying to extract ourselves. We couldn't move forward, we couldn't go back, we're just stuck behind this wall. Almost every one of my guys fired off all of their ammo."[242] The artillery observation officer, Capt Tom Hicks, could not fire on the targets because of the close proximity of the lead sections. A C-6 machine gun was brought forward to provide cover fire as RPGs started to explode around them. Duncan's platoon extracted under fire to a better location in a compound complex, while 155mm rounds detonated less than 40 metres away. The Canadians had shrapnel embedded in their body armour because the rounds were landing so closely to them. A GBU dropped onto one compound, flattening it, and the fire slackened off. C Company "went firm" into an all-round defence and set up Claymore mines.[243]

The two feints across the Arghandab River were in contact with enemy forces immediately on the morning of 14 June. North of Mushan, an Afghan army platoon mentored by three Canadians bumped into about 15 enemy fighters and a gunfight in a walled orchard area ensued. They were joined by an OH-58D from the Banshees, but with no interoperable communications, it was up to Cpl Tyler Latta to mark the target with a 203mm grenade round. The helicopter emptied its rocket pod and .50mm machine gun into the insurgents. A Sperwer TUAV

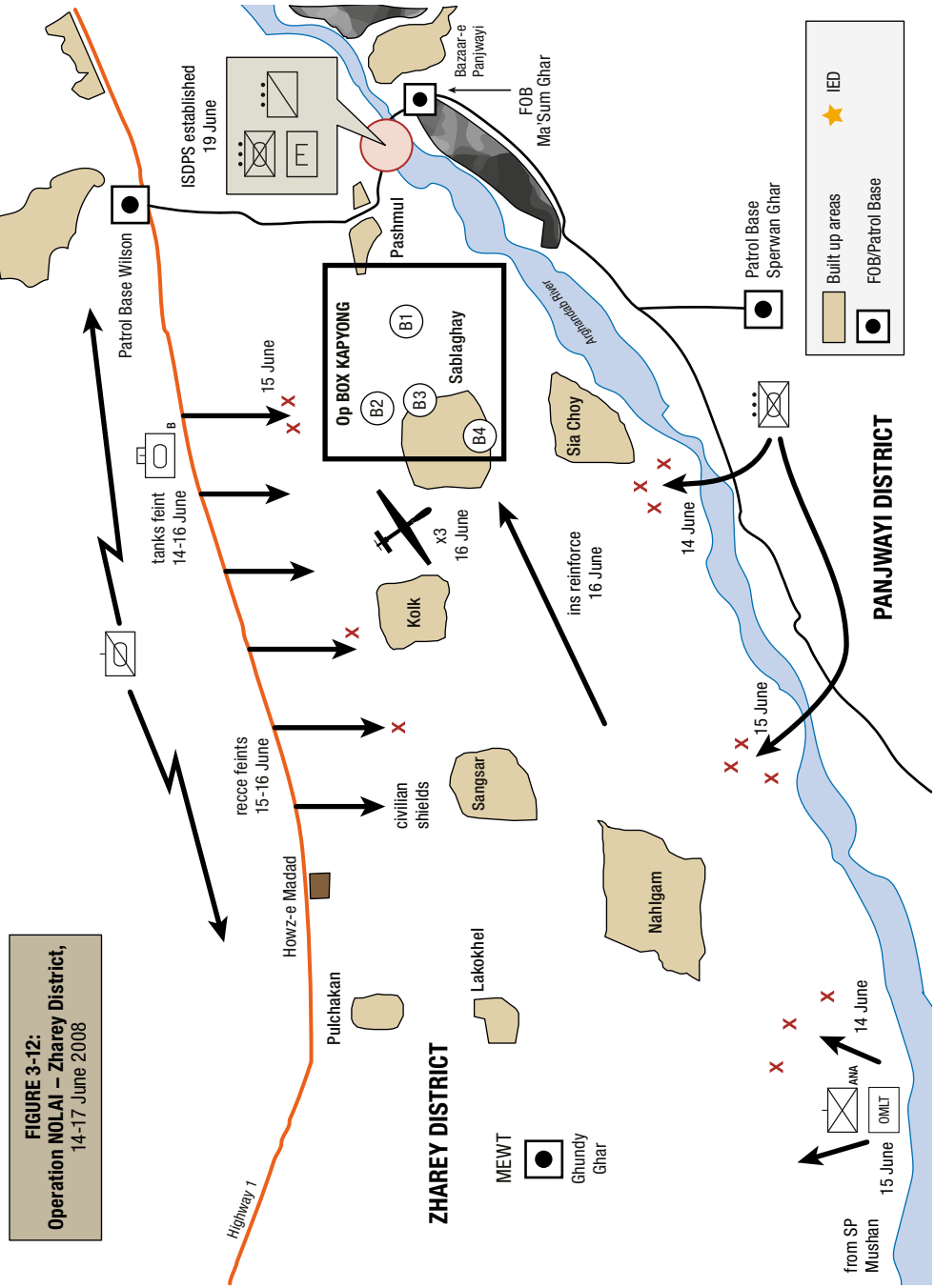


Figure 3-12: Operation NOLAI – Zharey District, 14-17 June 2008

then spotted an enemy 82mm recoilless rifle team and other reinforcements moving in. An MQ-9 Reaper engaged them with a 500-pound bomb. The OH-58D, low on fuel, departed, which prompted more enemy to break cover, and another engagement ensued. Approximately 12 enemy were killed in these encounters. The OMLT and the Afghans retired to Strong Point Mushan, where three mortar rounds received them on the way in.[244] A similar situation replicated itself with Maj Mike Lane's B Company platoon operating north of PSS Zangabad. Crossing the river and feinting toward two objectives, they encountered sporadic fire, but with orders not to become decisively engaged, they retired back across the river by late morning. Maj Chris Adams and B Squadron Combat Team conducted a pair of breaches south from Highway 1 as well. Like the B Company moves, these were diversionary in nature and resulted in no contact.[245]

The next morning, on 15 June, C Company lined up three platoons and assaulted the enemy-held compounds across the road. There was room-to-room fighting throughout the day as the enemy reinforced from Ghariban to the north. "We threw a grenade into every single room, shot in every single door, we counted the blood trails and then we got on the roof of the hotel and did the same thing," recalled Lt Duncan, "All day it was just contacts when they started probing us from Ghariban. I just sat on that roof and I had a sniper up there watching….It was just beautiful. Icom said at one point we killed like, 90 guys or something ridiculous and we sat there for three days just dropping bombs. My body was just wrecked with the heat and the guys were getting IVs every night because they were so dehydrated. We melted the hand guards on all of the weapons and new ones had to be brought in by helicopter."[246]

These reinforcing insurgent fighters were dispatched with artillery fire and a sniper with an AR-10. The snipers were, throughout the course of Operation NOLAI, able to call down 155mm fire from the guns on several occasions against reinforcing insurgents who approached the battle area in small numbers.

The OMLT and Afghan platoon then crossed the Arghandab again to the west of their original crossing point. This was a navigation error, but the ISTAR systems watched as the enemy command system "just went nuts" at this incursion and poured reinforcements into the area. Artillery was called in on them as the Afghan platoon, with no cover in the riverbed, withdrew south, where they were engaged from the Panjwayi side of the river. The Canadian mentors then "walked" artillery onto the insurgent position and retired once again back to the strong point. An MQ-1 Predator then engaged more enemy as they were moving around on the Zharey side.[247]

The B Company platoon from PSS Zangabad crossed the river again, this time displacing west, where insurgents occupying a grape hut engaged them. M-777 artillery was called in, flattening the structure, and the Canadian platoon retired back across the Arghandab.

Maj Boivin's Recce Squadron also mounted a series of feints with their Coyotes, south from positions on Highway 1. In one case, the enemy used children as shields, preventing one engagement, and the other feint was engaged with mortars and small-arms fire.[248]

Maj Adams then took B Combat Team south and breached toward Objective B-2. This was designed to draw off pressure from C Company over in B-1. After clearing B-2, the Leopards and the Afghan company leaguered for the night, but were attacked after dark. Twelve enemy were killed with 105mm and 120mm tank fire.[249]

The enemy reinforced their positions in B-4 and B-3 on 16 June. ISTAR resources carefully monitored the course of the fight and detected a number of vehicles containing enemy leaders moving around B-3 and B-2. An MQ-9 Reaper was now on station and was cleared to engage. Three Hellfire missiles made short work of the vehicles. Post-battle assessment suggested that a prominent Taliban leader in Kandahar, commander Kako [Uncle], was killed in the strike along with a number of his men.[250]

Having recocked, B Combat Team feinted again south from Highway 1, west of Objective B-2, while Recce Squadron made two more feints in Objectives C and D again. By this time, the enemy continued to feed reinforcements into the B-1 fight, where C Company continued to hold them there and call in close air support and artillery over a protracted period. The enemy did not notice that an Afghan army company quietly moved into Stability Box JUNO, accompanied by a platoon from B Company, Recce Platoon and combat engineers. Operation ISTINGA SANGA was on its way. By 19 June, the interim sub-district police station was constructed and waiting to be manned. Three days into the Zharey District operations, however, enemy forces were detected moving on Arghandab District and Operation NOLAI was put on hold.[251] The "Hold" for Stability Box JUNO was itself left suspended as forces were required elsewhere.

The Sarposa Prison Break, 13 June 2008

On 8 June, over 30 members (50%) of the Sarposa Prison staff, came down with food poisoning.[252] An earlier National Directorate of Security report on 8 March, however, warned that "The Taliban have received poisonous materials from a 'foreign' country. They plan to introduce this material to the water supply and foodstuffs of military and governmental organizations."[253] Nobody connected these two pieces of information together at the time.

Some time after 1030 hours on 13 June, a large fuel truck approached the front gate of the prison, which was located in the west end of Kandahar City. A man leapt out of the truck's cab and was shot by one of the Afghan tower guards. An insurgent then stepped up and fired an RPG round into the truck, detonating 1 800 kilograms of explosives, and levelling the two towers and the gate. Another insurgent team moved in, shot at anybody in uniform, and opened the cell blocks. Minivans and taxis, prepositioned in the adjacent neighbourhoods,

arrived at the breach in waves and whisked away escaping prisoners. Responding local Afghan police encountered barriers and possible IEDs on their way to the prison.[254] The PRT's EOD Team was alerted when word was passed that the QRF routes to the prison were mined.[255]

Word arrived at the JPCC, who alerted TF Kandahar. JPCC operations were attenuated in that two of the three Afghan interpreters uncharacteristically did not show up for work that day.[256] MQ-1 Predators supporting Operation NOLAI were directed over the prison. LCol Woodworth at the PRT deployed his QRF, which consisted of an infantry platoon in LAV III and EOD team in Bisons. They arrived to find General Saqib, the provincial chief of police, directing police to cordon and then retake the prison. When the ANSF got inside, they found the armoury and pharmacy emptied, and 800 of the 1,100 prisoners gone. Of the 800 escapees, 385 were captured insurgents incarcerated at Sarposa. Six guards were killed and four wounded, while responding police had one killed and two wounded.[257] The released insurgents were delivered in small groups to Asheque, Nakhonay and Arghandab. Within hours, Provincial Council leader Ahmad Wali Karzai "made statements…that exaggerated the situation. During subsequent days, his comments on the situation in Arghandab further inflamed the situation."[258] It was not a coincidence that during the previous week, Malam Akbar, a respected elder and brother to the former police chief in Arghandab, was assassinated.[259]

The Sarposa "spectacular" stunned the entire coalition and made international news. It was a tremendous information operations failure which Canada, as a nation, had to wear. Of those 385 insurgents, many of them were IED emplacers, constructors and facilitators The rest were trained and seasoned fighters and, as we have seen, the Taliban had a shortage of trained personnel. In one fell swoop, the breakout restocked the enemy's ranks in the middle of summer.

The Sarposa breakout, however, benefited a wide variety of interests. Outside players carefully planned it, with the active and passive assistance provided by those interests and, as such, the operation cannot be explained as a purely insurgent attack as it was endemic of the environment that Canada was dealing with (see Appendix B).

Sarposa was assessed to be an "outside job" in that it was planned outside Afghanistan and benefited from Al Qaeda advice and support. The "Afghan face" of the operation was Commander Mahmood, a former inmate of Sarposa released by "accident" (that is, bribery), but the personnel who executed the attack were a special team hired from Pakistan for the job.[260] The infamous Jabar Agha also provided support from his network in the city. Canadian and American officers co-located with the various ANSF that day all noted that the Afghan police under Saqib's control were not activated in anything resembling a prompt manner, that is, the city was not locked down with checkpoints as the police had done in the past, and escaping prisoners were not pursued at all. It took the

Photo Credit: Author

Sarposa Prison was the scene of a mass escape of insurgents on 13 June 2008. The enemy used Sarposa as a command and control node, as well as an indoctrination and training facility, much in the same way the Irish Republican Army used British prisons during The Troubles.

American Police Mentoring Teams to apply "heavy mentoring" to get the police out of barracks and into the streets. The Afghan army, however, was able to respond, and launched 5th Kandak from 1-205 Brigade into the city as soon as they could to establish checkpoints, but this took hours. There was extreme suspicion, from a variety of Canadian observers, that the Afghan police in the city were deliberately dragging their feet, and a number of Canadians expressed the belief that Saqib and people working for him had been bought off or told not to respond.[261] LCol Woodworth directed that the PRT force protection company patrol with the Afghan police and army throughout the city to re-establish the psychological high ground. The Sarposa attack hit the coalition at five weak points all at once: Canada–United States relations were affected, as were Canadian–Afghan relations. The Afghans, not surprisingly, pointed fingers in every possible direction internally and the blame fell on the Canadians as Sarposa was a Canadian project. Security, obviously, was undermined by the attack, as was governance.

Canadian responsibility was overlooked in the subsequent Afghan autopsy of the incident that was conducted by low-ranking personnel.[262] The reality was, Sarposa was a showpiece of Canadian human rights, gender equality, and rule of law. The Correctional Services Canada assessment team that deployed earlier in the year had no Afghan context to make its analysis. Therefore, it made recommendations based on Canadian cultural standards that focused on lack of beds, and electrical wiring that was not up to Canadian code. (Traditional Afghans do not use beds and the idea that any Afghan structure would meet Canadian electrical standards was, in a word, unrealistic; a Canadian prison would be heaven to an average Afghan, let alone an insurgent.) Correctional Services Canada was simply not attuned to the possibility of external assault.[263]

That facade masked what was really going on at Sarposa: the enemy within. In an insurgency, prisons are not facilities that merely hold insurgents. They are training and indoctrination facilities for insurgents. In Canada, people in prisons are criminals sent there by the legal system for punitive measures, not prisoners of war captured on the battlefield. Correctional Services Canada had no experience dealing with hard-core ideologically-motivated terrorists until the Millhaven holding facility opened in 2006–2007. Correctional Services Canada was philosophically and doctrinally unprepared to handle a handful of terrorists who employed the Al Qaeda "conduct after capture manual" in that facility. They also backed off under the pressure of a handful of human right lawyers when they tried to get tough.[264]

The use of prisons for insurgent training and ideological hardening is not new in history: Nelson Mandela is but one example, as is Sayyid Qutb, Michael Collins and Gerry Adams. The Irish Republican Army was able to revitalize itself in 1917–18 and in the 1970s because its leaders were all imprisoned together with nothing better to do than plan. The young diplomats from DFAIT and older social developers from CIDA at the PRT had no experience with such things. Neither did Correctional Services Canada personnel, who had prison gang experience but no experience dealing with politicized Islam in its violent forms. Sarposa was a major failure of imagination for the OGDs, those directing them in Ottawa, and those pursuing the human rights agendas from comfortable offices in Western capitals.

As the PRT Specialist Engineer Team worked with Afghans to rebuild the prison, Canadian CIMIC reporting caught the mood of the population. In several districts after the Sarposa attack: "the people view the incident as a demonstration of the strength of the Taliban and the insurgents in the province and the ineptitude of the Government of Kandahar to maintain control of the security situation…confidence in the Government of Kandahar is at an all-time low…."[265]

Operation DAOR BUKHOU: Arghandab II

The events leading up to the second Taliban incursion into Arghandab District were concurrent with those of the Sarposa break out. On 7 June, a day before the Sarposa staff were poisoned, Malim Akbar Khakrezwal, the brother of the former Arghandab police chief and a key Alikozai leader, was assassinated. The Deputy Governor (Asadullah Khalid was not in the province at the time) called the JPCC and warned the staff that Arghandab District centre was going to come under attack. He directed General Saqib to increase patrols in the district. Those patrols reported in on 9 June: there were 40 or 50 fighters converging on and meeting in Jelawur. It was unclear as to what their intentions were. Insurgents also attacked two checkpoints in southern Shah Wali Kot. Canadian assessments suggested this was "a prelude to future insurgent operations in Arghandab."[266]

The attack on Sarposa took place on 13 June. Less than two hours after the breakout, the Arghandab chief of police, Haji Rahmatullah, was targeted with an IED. He survived, but was somewhat distracted by this event.[267] Despite this decapitation attempt, the Arghandab police relayed information that two separate insurgent organizations were now operating in the district "in order to unsettle the area as further preparations for a broader attack in the future." The day after Sarposa, reporting continued to pour in. One insurgent group was going to enter from Senjaray, and the other from Shah Wali Kot. Another group from Sangin would move to Khakrez via Ghorak. The Afghan assessment was that "there are too many reports of insurgents' intent to be ignored." Three weapons caches in Jelawur and two other villages in Arghandab were in the process of being emptied. Small groups of Taliban moved among the villages instructing the people not to cooperate with the government, while Afghan police found mines on the roads.[268]

The Canadian response to the deteriorating Arghandab situation and Sarposa was initially convoluted: were the Afghans, TF Kandahar or Regional Command (South) in charge? Regional Command (South) took command of the response on 16 June, as close coordination was required between Kabul and Kandahar; between Regional Command (South) and 205 Corps; and between ISAF and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. MGen Lessard met with the Deputy Governor and Commander 205 Corps. Subsequent to this, a request went to Kabul for another kandak and the Operation DAOR BUKHOU [Turn Around] operations order was issued.[269] (See Figure 3-13.)

Operation DAOR BUKHOU became a large multinational operation. Regional Command (South) moved a British infantry company from the Regional Battle Group (South) to Kandahar, where it initiated patrols in the southwest quadrant of the city. 205 Corps sent 5th Kandak into Kandahar City to establish a ring of checkpoints, backing up a ring of police checkpoints on the periphery of the city. U.S. TF 71 immediately sent

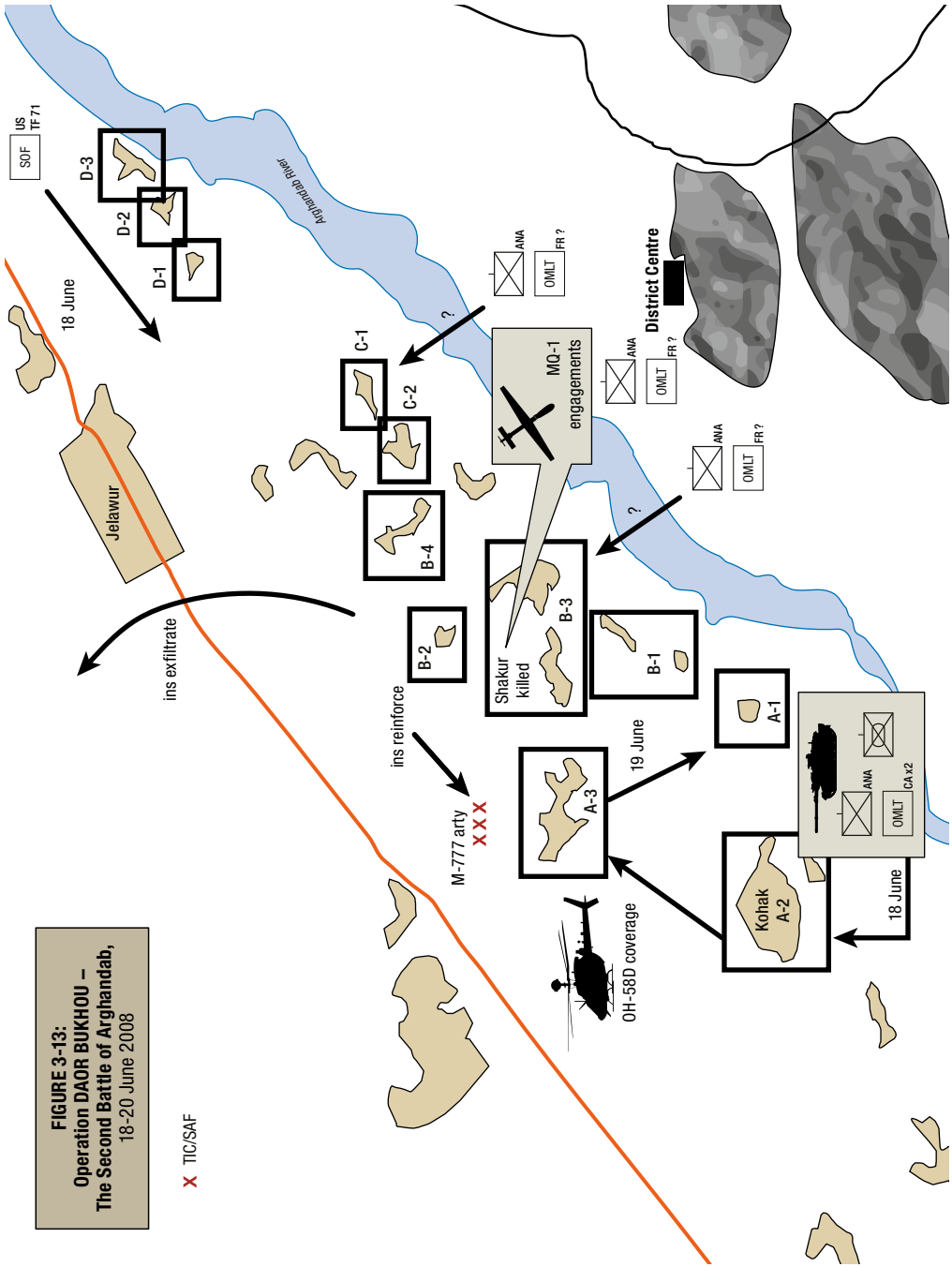


Figure 3-13: Operation DAOR BUKHOU – The Second Battle of Arghandab, 18-20 June 2008

a detachment south from Shah Wali Kot. TF Kandahar instructed LCol Woodworth to deploy the PRT's force protection company from Camp Nathan Smith to patrol the inner part of the city.[270]

With Col Riffou away on leave, LCol Drew of the OMLT received verbal orders from BGen Thompson on 17 June "to get up to the Arghandab District centre and hold it as soon as possible." Canadian combat engineers deployed with them, in part because they were mounted in LAV III and could boost the firepower of the kandak if required. Drew had no information on enemy dispositions. 1-205 Brigade also ordered 1st Kandak to establish a series of checkpoints to the west of the city. Drew ensured that this took place.[271] He was joined by the 12-man TF 71 detachment that night.

Photo Credit: DND AR2008-K031-43

The enemy tried, once again, to move in and take Arghandab District in June 2008. Operation DAOR BUKHOU, led by BGen Denis Thompson, in conjunction with his Afghan army and police counterparts, rapidly retook the district. This press conference was conducted at the district centre: beyond the Arghandab River lies the "green belt" occupied by enemy forces.

LCol Corbould was also away on leave, so Deputy Commanding Officer Maj Stephen Joudrey handled the battle group response. Maj Grubb, Maj Adams and Maj Vieveen were ordered to prepare a combat team, while Maj Boivin's Recce Squadron was to be prepared to conduct operations in Arghandab.[272]

With more ISTAR resources directed at Arghandab, and with reports coming in from the PRT CIMIC teams who retained connections with the population in the district,[273] the enemy picture was defined. Taliban forces were in control of Jelawur and Kuhak, each of which appeared to have 50 fighters. The enemy surrounded two Arghandab police positions southwest of Jelawur but the police had not surrendered and fought on. Insurgents disguised as police occupied checkpoints along the road down to Highway 1: they blew up culverts and tried to damage bridges. In the northeast, another enemy force destroyed culverts along the roads. Mullah Mahmood seemed to be in command, relaying order to four sub-commanders. Teams of insurgents told the civilian population that they had seven days to get out of the district.[274] This implied that the enemy forces operating in Arghandab were the precursor for a larger number of reinforcements that were on the way and were planning on fighting for the district in the same way the enemy had in Zharey back in 2006.

In Kabul, Maj.-Gen. Al Howard at Combined Security Assistance Command Afghanistan watched the Afghan ministry of defence react to the situation down south:

> Bismillah Khan mounts up, takes [a] number of troops from 201 Corps and arrives in Kandahar with them. And the way we marked it at the time it [took 36 hours to respond]. We at NATO provided the air flow. We were shocked. There was very little battle procedure. They just did it. They followed orders closely. When the Afghans want to do something, it gets done. No bureaucracy, no long order process. Everybody just seems to have an innate sense. We were just absolutely flabbergasted.[275]

Several companies from 1st Kandak, 201 Corps, arrived by air from Kabul, along with senior Afghan National Army and Ministry of Defence leaders. This kandak's mentoring organization was French, but the French OMLT refused to deploy south with their charges. The 201 Corps kandak companies moved to the eastern bank of the Arghandab and established positions below the district centre, while more came into Camp Hero. A platoon of unmentored 201 Corps Afghans was cut to the TF 71, who moved out to establish blocks to the north. By this point, the district centre was, according to Maj Joudrey, a "zoo" with Afghan police, army, Canadian, American, British and French Army personnel, all present along with scads of international media, who wanted a front-row seat for another Operation MEDUSA and were filming the exodus of Arghandabis as they fled the district in cars, donkey carts and bicycles.[276] Incredibly, as CIMIC reported from its contacts, "In Nagahan, followers of recently assassinated Abdul Hakim Jan began fighting the Taliban. [Jan] is seen as a martyr.…This morning many of his followers took their weapons and warned the Taliban they would fight to the death.…These same people are frustrated and do not trust the government but continue to defend themselves against the Taliban."[277]

Photo Credit: DND AR2008-K079-02

Personal relationships between Canadians and Afghans paid dividends over time. LCol Dan Drew from the OMLT and Lt.-Col.Habibi prepare for operations in Arghandab. In 2011, Habibi was promoted to command 1-205 Brigade, which worked closely with TF Kandahar.

"H" Hour was set for 0400 hours on 18 June. There were delays, as a number of Afghan trucks bogged as they manoeuvred into the blocks to the north. C Company, led by Capt Scott McGregor (Maj Grubb was on leave), and the Afghan company from 1st Kandak, moved into their positions in the riverbed, to move north and act as the "piston." TF 71 and an Afghan platoon were in position to the northeast, while the unmentored 201 Corps troops screened the east bank.

TF 71 had the first contact at 0800, with an enemy observation post on the Arghandab–Shah Wali Kot boundary. As C Company manoeuvred, an AHSVS truck struck an IED, disabling it. An hour later, the Canadian OMLT with 1st Kandak reported sporadic fire directed at the Afghans from a compound complex. A pair of AH-64 Apache attack helicopters from TF Eagle Assault came on station, facilitated through Regional Command (South)'s air cell and leveled the building the enemy were firing from. The AH-64s were out of ammunition and were replaced with OH-58D Warriors, who covered the dead ground around the Canadians and Afghans as they approached objectives A-2 and A-3. B Squadron's Leopards supported both axes of attack. To the west was 1st Kandak with

one company and two OMLT teams, 71B and 71D, and to the east was C Company. The force manoeuvred onto objectives A-2 and A-3, and around 0740 hours, A-2 was reported secure. A-3's compound complexes were reported cleared by 1040, and forces prepared to move onto Objective B-2. One OH-58D spotted insurgents reinforcing the objective area and was able to call in artillery fire from B Battery's M-777 guns, while another helicopter expended its rockets on another insurgent group.[278]

Around 1500 hours, C Company got into a TIC, but the enemy firing dropped off due to the presence of the helicopters. After 1800 hours, both OMLT teams and their Afghan charges engaged in two firefights, and broke contact after some Afghan troops were wounded. The enemy even engaged a Leopard with a sniper, to no effect.

In an eerie replay of November 2007's events, MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper UAVs spotted what amounted to an enemy orders group around 1942 hours and engaged it with Hellfire missiles. The battle group Tactical Operations Centre team was able to conduct six separate engagements against clusters of enemy, killing eight in one pass and 12 in another. Four more engagements added to these and produced an estimated 70 enemy casualties. According to Maj Joudrey, it was "kill, kill, kill."[279] The enemy commanders called for reinforcements from surrounding cells and networks, but none arrived.[280]

On 19 June, 1st Kandak and mentors, C Company and B Squadron shifted focus to Objective A-1. The tanks secured the line of departure at 0523 hours. At 0735, the assault went in with the Leopards breaching. By 1215, the compounds were cleared. The enemy leadership decided to withdraw, having "assessed that their losses over the past day were too great to sustain the operation." One of the Predator strikes apparently killed Mullah Shakur, a prominent Taliban commander, and wounded several other sub-commanders.[281]

There were now international issues. The Afghans wanted to get the 201 Corps companies into the action and take Objective B-3, but their French mentors would not deploy from Kabul (it was crucial to have ISAF mentors with the Afghans so that they would show up in the ISAF command's systems and not be engaged by coalition air or artillery.) It took President Sarkozy's intervention to force them to do so, but they would not arrive in time. Meanwhile, a U.S. Marine Corps ETT arrived, but were having problems marrying up with the 201 Corps personnel. And then there were communications problems. Not all of the systems were interoperable and, at one point during the operation, the battle group's tactical headquarters became the only means of relaying information from the OMLT to higher headquarters. TF 71 and its Afghan company went into Objective D, cleared and pulled back. There was confusion in that they were supposed to move onto Objective B-4, but that now became an Afghan–French tasking. Then the French refused to go in with the 201 Corps kandak.

This left Jelawur unsaturated, and probably facilitated enemy exfiltration to the north. Attempts to insert the arriving Commando Kandak to block them were too late.[282]

The decision was made on 20 June to hand off operations in Arghandab from TF Kandahar to 1-201 Brigade and their French mentors and, on 21 June, Canadian forces withdrew from the district. This left three companies from 201 Corps, all now mentored by the French OMLT: two located west of the river and one at the district centre. None were in Jelawur. These forces were supplemented with: an unmentored company from 4th Kandak; Maj Boivin and his Recce Squadron, which moved into FOB Frontenac; and TF 77, a platoon of Lithuanian Special Forces. There initially appeared to be no consolidation plan involving the PRT and CIMIC. Some Afghan police returned but not in any organized fashion. Those that did patrol their communities found mass graves of insurgent fighters killed during Operation DAOR BUKHOU.[283]

The deficiencies in a Hold plan for Arghandab were belatedly addressed nearly a week later. A follow-on operation on 2 July, Operation PARDA, deployed Recce Squadron Coyote observation positions backed up with an infantry platoon to the Arghandab–Khakrez pass. PARDA rationalized Hold forces in Arghandab. By this time, five police checkpoints, two Afghan army checkpoints and four Afghan army "ambush areas" were established in the central part of the district.[284] Psychologically, Operation DAOR BUKHOU had a positive effect on the Kandahar population: "The overall mood has done another 180 degree swing since the Sarposa incident and support for the insurgents appears to be rapidly declining."[285]

The ragged consolidation that took place after Operation DAOR BUKHOU, coupled to the near-decapitation of Alikozai leadership, however, led to long-term problems in Arghandab District. Initial ASIC estimates suggested that there were 70–100 enemy casualties, of which 25 to 40 were killed in action. If this was an enemy vanguard force that was establishing itself and awaiting reinforcement, then its defeat and rout were as important as Operation INTIZAAR ZMAREY the previous fall. However, the insurgents left behind forces that emerged on 23 June to destroy two police checkpoints and the Jelawur clinic. A police shootout on 25 and 26 June resulted in the capture of 12 fighters. The Canadian J2 assessed that "most insurgents have left Arghandab with only local insurgents or those who could not promptly depart for other areas left behind. Insurgents are unlikely to conduct more than attacks in self-defence at this time."[286]

Afghans kept reporting to the JPCC and to other Canadian venues that there was still enemy in Arghandab. TF Kandahar J2 altered its view slightly: "There are indications that rank and file insurgents, unlike some higher level commanders, were not downcast by the insurgent retreat from Arghandab. It is therefore possible that, not being under the impression that they were defeated, they intend to proceed with their normal activities…."[287] Though Operation DAOR BUKHOU was completed, the battle for Arghandab continued.

Canadian Involvement with Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan

In the last chapter, we saw how CSTC-A's American police mentor teams lay outside the ISAF chain of command, yet at the same time operated in the Canadian battle space in Kandahar Province. In May 2002, the U.S. Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan was renamed the Office of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan. On 4 April 2006, it was redesignated as CSTC-A, and assigned to the U.S. CENTCOM. CSTC-A became a combined joint interagency organization and was located in Kabul. The senior leadership staff included U.S. Army, Canadian, Polish and British officers. The Canadians were part of this organization under the umbrella of Operation ARCHER.

The CSTC-A mission was to plan, programme and implement structural, organizational, institutional and management reform of the ANSF, which consist of the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police, in order to develop a stable Afghanistan, strengthen the rule of law, and deter and defeat terrorism within its borders. CSTC-A provided advisors, mentors and trainers to help both the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior organize, train, equip, employ and support the ANSF in order to do everything from defeating the insurgency and providing internal security to setting the conditions for economic development, and gaining the trust and confidence of the citizens of Afghanistan.

In early 2008, Canada identified that the existing staff officer contribution to CSTC-A should be increased, in part to provide greater situational awareness on activities in that command. BGen Al Howard and BGen Larry O'Brien eventually replaced BGen Dennis Tabbernor, who represented Canadian interests in 2007. Howard and O'Brien respectively worked in the army and police programme arms of this American command, while Col Jay Milne was the senior mentor to the Afghan National Army. Overall, the tasks involved mentoring the Afghan equivalent of National Defence headquarters, and harness CSTC-A's staff to improve Afghan National Army and Afghan police development.[288]

The Canadians at CSTC-A were in a position to see just how challenging it was to produce the ANSF and did what they could to influence the situation and to improve the position in southern Afghanistan and Kandahar Province. There were numerous issues, almost too many to list. The new Afghan National Army was a mix of leaders who were Mujahideen and others who were Soviet-trained. The illiteracy levels were staggering.

The largest problem was the template that this new army was being mentored to produce. Under pressure from American stakeholders who wanted to see progress, CSTC-A tried to generate large numbers of trained ANSF. The pressure produced, for want of a better phrase, quality control problems in already problematic organizations. And, as one observer put it, the Afghan National Army was not optimized for counter-insurgency operations:

"We built them a bunch of garrisons, as we would in North America and Europe, and then wondered why they weren't living in the population….They're living like we're living back home, isolated from communities and at a much higher living standard."[289]

Western technology was passed on to the Afghans, which they could not maintain, and thus they became dependent on Western contractors. They were not provided with a sustainable military structure. And the list continued.[290] However, with the momentum established as far back as 2003, it was difficult to alter the trajectory of this system. Indeed, the near-post-apocalyptic environment of Afghanistan warranted at least some structure, no matter how imperfect it was.

CSTC-A was also divided on the type of policing that the Afghans should be mentored on. Were the police "beat cops" or were they militia?

> Europeans wanted a much more deliberate street-cop approach to policing: traffic tickets…. But that's not in a war environment. So [the Europeans] wouldn't deploy their people forward. They bristled at the idea that you would train the police in what were basic infantry skills. When the Commanding General of CSTC-A was asked, "What training do the police need right now?" He said, "Basic infantry training." His European colleagues would freak out.[291]

When the Germans gave up and handed off policing, the mission went to CSTC-A so it was no surprise when the more military approach dominated. That put CSTC-A on a collision course with the Ministry of the Interior. The corruption level at the Ministry of the Interior was significantly higher than in the Ministry of Defence and the inability to reconcile that high-level corruption with effective police programmes in the provinces was an issue that dogged everyone involved. It had no apparent solution: the problem of having provincial governors appointing district leaders who had their own police undermined any attempts at proper central government authority.

This was where the Afghan Regional Security Integration Commands under CSTC-A came into play. They had existed since 2006 and with their increased involvement in the policing role, they developed an information collection function on the state of Afghan policing in their operating areas. Those data were sent back through CSTC-A and then employed by the commanders in Kabul as suasion whenever they could with their Afghan counterparts. The main disconnect was that the Afghan Regional Security Integration Commands had no formal connection to the ISAF Regional Commands and had information-sharing issues related to this. By having senior Canadians in CSTC-A, Canada was able to maintain awareness of what was going on at a higher level and then feed back down to TF Kandahar as required.[292]

It was an imperfect system that trundled along in 2008–2009. There were, as one observer explained, "several entities that were not glued together" but the Canadian Army played a significant role in making things happen both in Kabul and in Kandahar by getting all of the players in one room. The ability of the Canadian officers in CSTC-A and at TF Kandahar to communicate on the Canadian back channel was a significant factor in maintaining national situational awareness in the increasingly confused environment that involved multiple coalitions and varying agendas.

Policing in Kandahar Province

As discussed in the previous chapter, significant friction existed between the American Police Mentoring Teams' leadership and the Laroche headquarters, and the lack of unity of effort in this area detrimentally affected policing in the districts. The Ministry of the Interior imposed Focused District Development to clean up the district police forces in spring 2008. General Saqib and the senior American police mentor openly disagreed with the Kabul government and CSTC-A's bringing in "outsider" police to conduct Focused District Development. The Canadians in TF Kandahar were told by the senior American police mentor that it was none of Canada's business because what he was doing lay outside the ISAF chain of command. The senior American police mentor further instructed "that his personnel break contact with TFK HQ."[293]

Saqib then shook up the police by appointing Essa Khan as Panjwayi chief of police, with the former ex-district chief, Bismillah, as his deputy. Bismillah Khan from Panjwayi now went to Zharey District and Fida Mohammad replaced Col. Akka in Dand.[294] These changes only aggravated a bad situation in Zharey and Panjwayi, alienating almost all factions in both districts and threw policing into confusion (personal loyalty to one commander meant that personnel followed him—with their weapons and vehicles). During this period, Governor Asadullah Khalid stopped communicating with the JPCC so there was no higher direction or liaison with the Governor on police matters.[295]

Even while the Focused District Development process was at work in Zharey and Panjwayi, there were other factors undermining policing in the province. First, there was the existence of the Governor's private militia. This was the successor to Standby Police Unit 005, now called Battalion 02, and boosted with personnel who appeared to be Hazara in ethnicity.[296] Battalion 02 apparently took tactical direction from the provincial chief of police but really belonged to Asadullah Khalid. Second, the decision by TF Kandahar to hire private security forces for base security to free up Canadian soldiers opened up the market for ANSF personnel to sell or resell their services to these companies. Some of those companies appeared out of the ether and had connections to various factions or elements of the Kandahari power structure. In some cases, for example, a member of the provincial

police might moonlight for a forward operating base security company or UNAMA, but retain his weapon and uniform. So could a member of Battalion 02. Other armed personnel from elsewhere arrived to sign up for the security companies. Once again, there was no unity of policing and each entity in the power structure retained an informal militia under the guise of another organization or organizations.

Several Canadians viewed the senior American police mentor to be too closely associated with Saqib and an impediment to Canadian attempts to establish effective policing in key districts. Afghan Regional Security Integration Command (South) was made aware of this problem but decided to wait until his tour was completed before returning him to the United States.[297] His replacement was Col. James Walton, who arrived in late May 2008. Col. Walton and his team immediately initiated an investigation into what was going on and were believed to have uncovered information on Saqib's involvement with private security companies. They also started to investigate why Saqib's police responded so slowly to the Sarposa break out. On 21 June 2008, Col. Walton's MRAP vehicle was destroyed by an extremely large IED on Highway 1 in Senjaray. He was killed, along with three other American police mentors, in what turned out to be an IED-initiated ambush.[298]

Lt Reg McMichael led the QRF, consisting of a platoon of infantry and troop of Leopard tanks to the blast site. Highway 1 was cratered, 4 to 5 metres across and 6 metres deep. Col. Walton's MRAP vehicle was the only one destroyed in the convoy, and it was "completely obliterated." Another vehicle had been hit by heavy weapons fire, and there were wounded and dead all over the scene. McMichael and the QRF realized the American survivors were "combat ineffective," and in shock, so the Canadian platoon administered casualty care and secured the scene for the investigation.[299]

Investigators determined that the IED was a completely unique device, and employed methodologies not seen before. Or ever again. Several Canadian and American officers involved in policing issues in Kandahar Province believed that General Saqib or others in the Kandahari power structure were involved in some way in the Walton assassination, but could not prove it conclusively. Saqib was fired on 26 June, and the reasons given related to the Sarposa prison break and the failure to respond in a timely fashion.[300] Saqib asserted, after he was fired that there was a deal made between the Kandahar power structure and the Taliban to permit the Sarposa raid and that he was being scapegoated for the failure.[301] Policing in Kandahar Province, the key piece in any Hold and Build, remained in disarray.

The Provincial Reconstruction Team and Development, May–August 2008

The role of the TF Kandahar Development Advisor in the post-Manley environment was supposed to be enhanced but how the Development Advisor related to the Representative of Canada, how both related to the PRT, and how all of this related to the embassy in Kabul

remained a source of tension throughout the first half of 2008. The OGDs lacked the levels of command that the Army did, which meant that there was no real chain of command culture. DFAIT and CIDA communicated in formal and informal networks and were generally not as hierarchical as the Army. Elissa Golberg, according to BGen Thompson, spent most of her time attempting to achieve rapprochement between the various departments in Ottawa to gain consensus on decisions and then having to do the same thing all over again in theatre.[302]

The problem, once again, was what was known and not known in the province. For the most part, the PRT had to re-establish its baseline regarding which district development assemblies and community development councils were active in the province. CIDA decided to work with locally employed personnel to liaise with UN HABITAT, and this was a laborious process.[303] For example, the TF Kandahar Development Advisor, from CIDA, insisted that there were operational-level CIDA projects in Maywand. The Canadian tactical PSYOPS team assigned to Maywand went out and looked. They found no evidence that any of the CIDA-funded projects "were at a spade turning phase," though a lot of Canadian money had been spent on them.[304]

The PRT CIMIC teams, led by Maj Jim Allen, did their best to provide visibility on what was happening in the districts, while the various principals at the PRT tried to rationalize how to approach development in the province. The ideas of a District Development Plan and a Provincial Development Plan were once again deployed, but there remained a question as to how those plans related to what the district and community assemblies and councils wanted. The Provincial Development Committee was once again moribund under Asadullah Khalid, and the Provincial Development Plan remained "an exercise, a check in the box." The National Solidarity Programme was stalled, and the Community Development Councils were not functional in insecure areas. The District Development Assemblies remained ad hoc and also under threat in certain districts. Canadians therefore had to focus on the district level and work the problem district by district.[305]

There were increasing concerns about the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and the money Canada put into it at the Kabul level. There was no means to account for it or track where it was used—if it was used. And in the post-Manley environment, it now had to be employed and then connected to metrics in order to demonstrate progress. The PRT decided that if the National Solidarity Programme was not operational and there was no money coming in, or if the district assemblies were otherwise corrupt, the PRT would use the best funding envelope available to deal with the projects. This was completely ad hoc: CIDA had its KLIP money, the Army had the Commander's Contingency Fund, there was an "Information Operations" fund, quick impact project money, DFAIT's Global Peace and Security Fund, and USAID with its money.

Every effort was made to pass ownership to the district leaders, but it was clear that the PRT and CIMIC, once again, despite LCol Dana Woodworth's and the PRT's best efforts, were acting as a de facto government in Kandahar because Asadullah Khalid and Ahmad Wali Karzai were unwilling or unable to do the job themselves.[306]

Connecting with non-governmental organizations providing aid in the province was extremely problematic as they viewed themselves as neutral and thus were able to work in areas controlled or influenced by the Taliban. Their activities may have benefited the people in those communities to a certain extent, but ultimately, they undermined the effort to establish governance and rule of law which, in turn, benefited the insurgency. In effect, they provided the services that a government should be able to apply but could not. This in turn permitted the Taliban to take credit for the aid activities with the population, and the government could not. Worse, the insurgents "typically take between 10–20% of the value of any project as the price to provide protection. The United States and the international community are unintentionally fueling a vast political economy of security corruption in Afghanistan."[307]

As for the rule of law portfolio, progress remained glacial. Efforts taken in Kandahar City had almost no effect outside it. Two senior tribal elders from a marginalized tribe approached the PRT and came right to the point:

> They are feeling left out of the Government's decision-making and want some input into decision-making and think that the Government of Afghanistan are liars. They stated that they are unhappy with the judicial system and believes prisoners are being mistreated by the NDS.… They believe that the tribal shura deals with criminals and crime a lot better than the legal system. "We can solve problems in days that would take the government years."[308]

When the PRT looked into the polio eradication initiative that Canada already financially supported, CIMIC reported that a team leader in Panjwayi pocketed the money he was supposed to pay his field workers with.[309] With almost no visibility on what was happening outside Kandahar City, it was virtually impossible to assess the effectiveness of this support. CIMIC patrols occasionally encountered teenagers who were hired by Mirwais Hospital to vaccinate the population of Kandahar City.[310] By August, CIMIC teams were reporting that the Taliban were kidnapping and intimidating vaccinators.[311]

After Sarposa, development and reconstruction priorities shifted toward Kandahar City. Furthermore, Ottawa would not permit OGD personnel to deploy for significant periods to the districts. As a result, CIDA contracted the Central Asian Development Group to act as an "implementing partner" for projects in Panjwayi District.[312] This group preferred to

operate at the grass roots level and started operations in summer 2008. Nobody, apparently, told the WHOPPER group coordinating Canadian and Afghan activities in Panjwayi, so what the Central Asian Development Group did or did not do could not be measured or even verified.

With the shift of priorities toward Kandahar City after the Sarposa breakout in June, the relationship with the mayor, Ghulam Haider Hamidi, assumed increased importance. Assessed as "an educated, worldly, honest and apolitical Afghan patriot whose sole agenda is improving the quality of life" in the city, this was a man Canada could do business with. Like the provincial governor's office, however, the mayor lacked the tools: "the municipality's main problem is administrative, and the mayor's office lacks the internal systems and procedures and adequately trained personnel to manage the city's affairs. This deficiency is corroborated by the city's inability to spend all of the revenues it receives despite many pressing needs."[313] With an estimated 800 000 people, the city remained the centre of gravity of the coalition effort and more attention was required to address the city's ills.

The idea that Kandahar City should have development assemblies and councils like the rural districts was not new but it was complicated by the Afghan bureaucratic process. The National Solidarity Programme worked with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, which being the rural reconstruction department, did not deal with cities. When an experiment with UN HABITAT was attempted, Mayor Hamidi told the PRT that he "asked UN HABITAT to leave and not be involved with city officials…he thinks the staff UN HABITAT placed in his office were corrupt (taking bribes for awarding contracts to certain persons.) He did not like that the UN heavily publicized its involvement with the city and took credit for everything." Similarly, the mayor's engineering advisor noted that they were "constantly frustrated by UN HABITAT's lack of interest in coordinating their projects with the municipality or helping them plan for the city."[314]

By summer, Kandahar City was increasingly seen by TF Kandahar as an area of operations unto itself, with more and more Canadian counter-IED capability and signals capacity extant at the PRT. This increased interest attracted the attention of the insurgents. By the end of August, a two-man team on a motorcycle assassinated the second in command of the High Court, Hazarat Abdullah Mujahadi. This left Kandahar "with only seven judges for the entire province." Five IED attacks over three days after this murder was a portent that the city was once again becoming a "front" in the war.[315]

Operations in Zharey District, June–July 2008

In the wake of Sarposa and with the focus on Arghandab, Zharey appeared to become an operations backwater. The reality was that there was constant daily patrolling by Canadian and Afghan forces. Larger coalition operations continued but there were fewer of them.

The engineers tried to solve the Route Langley paving project problem but CMT-2 had problems recruiting due to enemy intimidation. The decision was taken to put in a combat road instead.

The enemy, pinned down in Garmsir in Helmand, tried to move resources into Zharey to keep this front alive. The number of Helmand-based insurgents and their leaders increased in the district.[316] Constant patrolling by the ANSF and their Canadian mentors helped define areas of increased insurgent influence. These resulted in numerous "shoot and scoot" contacts with few casualties to either side. The Afghan police and their Canadian mentors were able to determine that the enemy used former PSSs Kolk and Sangsar and that there was a significant forward presence in Burmohammad north of Pashmul.

Police information also indicated that the insurgents had pre-developed but left unmanned defensive positions set up in a ring to protect the areas they influenced. Most importantly, information collected by the Afghans noted that the population was sick and tired of "outsider" Taliban activities in their domains: they were shutting down markets, for example, and negatively affecting trade.[317] Then there was Operation KHAMOSH TEARANDAZ [Silent Archer] on 26 June.

There was far too much activity on the Spin Pir "firing range" so the Afghans decided to clear the compounds south of the strong point. The patrols encountered small teams of insurgents during four contacts; the enemy employed rapid "shoot and scoot" tactics to break contact. Consequently, only one enemy team could be engaged by artillery and even then, it was unclear how many were wounded or killed.[318]

B Battery was finally able to unleash its new capability. On 4 July, the P-OMLT stationed at Spin Pir on Highway 1 came under attack by an insurgent force that took up a firebase in a grape hut and manoeuvred on the police sub-station. The P-OMLT and Afghan police returned fire and called for support. They had no joint terminal air controller and no trained forward observation officer. They were asked for a 12-figure grid reference. In minutes, an M-982 Excalibur round wrecked the grape hut and the rest of the enemy fled.[319]

As for governance and development in Zharey, there was precious little of it in summer 2008 though there were big plans for Stability Box JUNO. People who wanted to work for CMT-2 were shot or otherwise intimidated. Elsewhere, one shura member told CIMIC "if the PRT was unwilling to do projects in Pashmul, then what was the point of attending the shura?"[320] Zharey District police were still "on the take": many people distrust the Afghan National Police and supported the insurgents instead."[321] This was confirmed by CMT-2: they collected evidence that the police were exacting a toll on the gravel trucks supporting the paving project and developed information that police dressed as insurgents killed workers who did not pay them off.[322]

Canadian OMLT and P-OMLT troops and the ANSF operating from Zharey tactical infrastructure into the interior of the district encountered daily contacts with enemy forces throughout July. The list is as voluminous as it is repetitive. Framework patrols, either P-OMLT and police or OMLT and Afghan army, got into contact, air or artillery fire support was brought down, there were a handful of enemy casualties and the patrol continued. Spin Pir was attacked with RPGs and mortars on numerous occasions, while FOBs Ma'Sum Ghar and Wilson were mortared or rocketed regularly. It is unclear, in retrospect, who was being disrupted: the coalition forces or the insurgents. The coalition was unable to clear the district, it could not Hold because there were not enough police, and the Build was completely stalled out because of the lack of governance and development capacity. The insurgents could not replicate the conditions of 2006 in the interior of the district thus far, and they were annoying the local population in certain areas. Their attempts to "keep the game alive" in Zharey were successful but they were unable to make the gains that they wanted to either.[323]

For the most part, Canadian activities were directed away from Zharey's interior and more and more toward Highway 1 as the enemy shifted operations there. One crucial node was the community of Senjaray. BGen Thompson directed efforts toward establishing a combat outpost there, mostly because it looked like the Taliban was increasingly intimidating the population and because the Alizais were politically isolated in Kandahar.[324] Canadian interest increased after the killing of a man who seemed to be a constant in the Kandahari power structure.

The Assassination of Habibullah Jan

Member of Parliament Habibullah Jan, *de facto* leader of the Alizais, was shot and killed on the night of 4 July while secretly visiting his new wife's family in Zharey District. The killer was later identified as a criminal released during the Sarposa prison break and was an Alizai related to his victim.[325] There were escaped Taliban operating in Senjaray after the prison break that were known to police but the provincial coordination centre reported that there were Afghan "communications problems" with warning Jan that he was targeted.[326] The Canadian OCC-P personnel, furthermore, were convinced that the assassination was "an inside job" that somehow involved the Kandahar provincial police.[327] In the days after, neither Governor Asadullah Khalid nor provincial council leader Ahmad Wali Karzai made any public comment on the killing, were camera-shy, and left the job up to the district leader and chief of police.[328]

TF Kandahar's assessment was that "The death of Habibullah Jan leaves a significant power vacuum in Eastern Zharey as the Alizai tribal elder wielded considerable power and influence. His assassination is one of a string of influential tribal elders killed in recent

months, which has changed the power dynamics in central Kandahar."[329] Furthermore, the consensus in TF Kandahar headquarters was that Jan's killing was not done by the Taliban.[330] LCol Woodworth at the PRT believed that Habibullah Jan was killed because he was starting to support Canadian efforts in the district.[331]

The Habibullah Jan killing was almost as destabilizing as the death of Mullah Naqib. Indeed, the death of both men, who were allies in opposing the Popalzai representatives' domination of Kandahari politics, wiped out the third "leg" of the Kandahar provincial power structure. It remains a telling point that not a single Barakzai or Popalzai power broker was assassinated during the 2006–2008 period. Like Sarposa and Arghandab, there was a suspicious convergence of interests between the insurgents and elements in the provincial power structure, but there was no hard evidence of a direct connection.[332]

The day after Jan was killed, the Governor moved 50 of his "police" into Sanjeray.[333] The Governor in effect occupied Sanjeray with his own forces and jettisoned the remaining implements of Alizai power. Ahmad Wali Karzai's primary rival was now no more. A CIMIC team noted that they "[do] not believe that many of the crimes currently attributed to the insurgents can be confirmed as actual insurgent activity and the possibility exists that complex local crime organizations are behind them."[334] The lack of confidence in the provincial government by the Alizais was confirmed when they sent a 40-man delegation to Kabul to press the President's Office on their concerns rather than parlay with Asadullah Khalid.[335]

Operation LUMBAR: The Fight for Highway 1 Starts, July–August 2008

The insurgents, regrouping from the Arghandab operation, looked everywhere to apply pressure on the coalition forces. Though operations in the interior of Zharey were stalemated, Highway 1 along Zharey District was an obvious and vulnerable target, so the IED specialists sprung from Sarposa were put to work alongside the existing networks operating in Zharey.[336] From 4 to 21 July, there were 18 ambushes, small-arms fire attacks and IED events from Asheque to Maywand, including six attacks against resupply efforts in a five-day period (see Figure 3-14). Highway 1 started to resemble Route Fosters. This state of affairs "negatively affected commercial and [coalition forces] freedom of movement, specifically the resupply of [coalition] elements." In this case, this meant anything west of Senjaray that required ground resupply, including Helmand Province.[337] Moreover, with the pending deployment of 2-2 Infantry to Maywand District, IED attacks had to be reduced along this route.

Operation LUMBAR was designed to address the Highway 1 problem. From 21 to 24 July, TF Kandahar reassessed the situation and, working through the OMLT, tried to develop an Afghan–Canadian solution. Regular sweeps of Highway 1, coupled with irregular vital point searches and culverts for IEDs, were manpower intensive and it was not clear

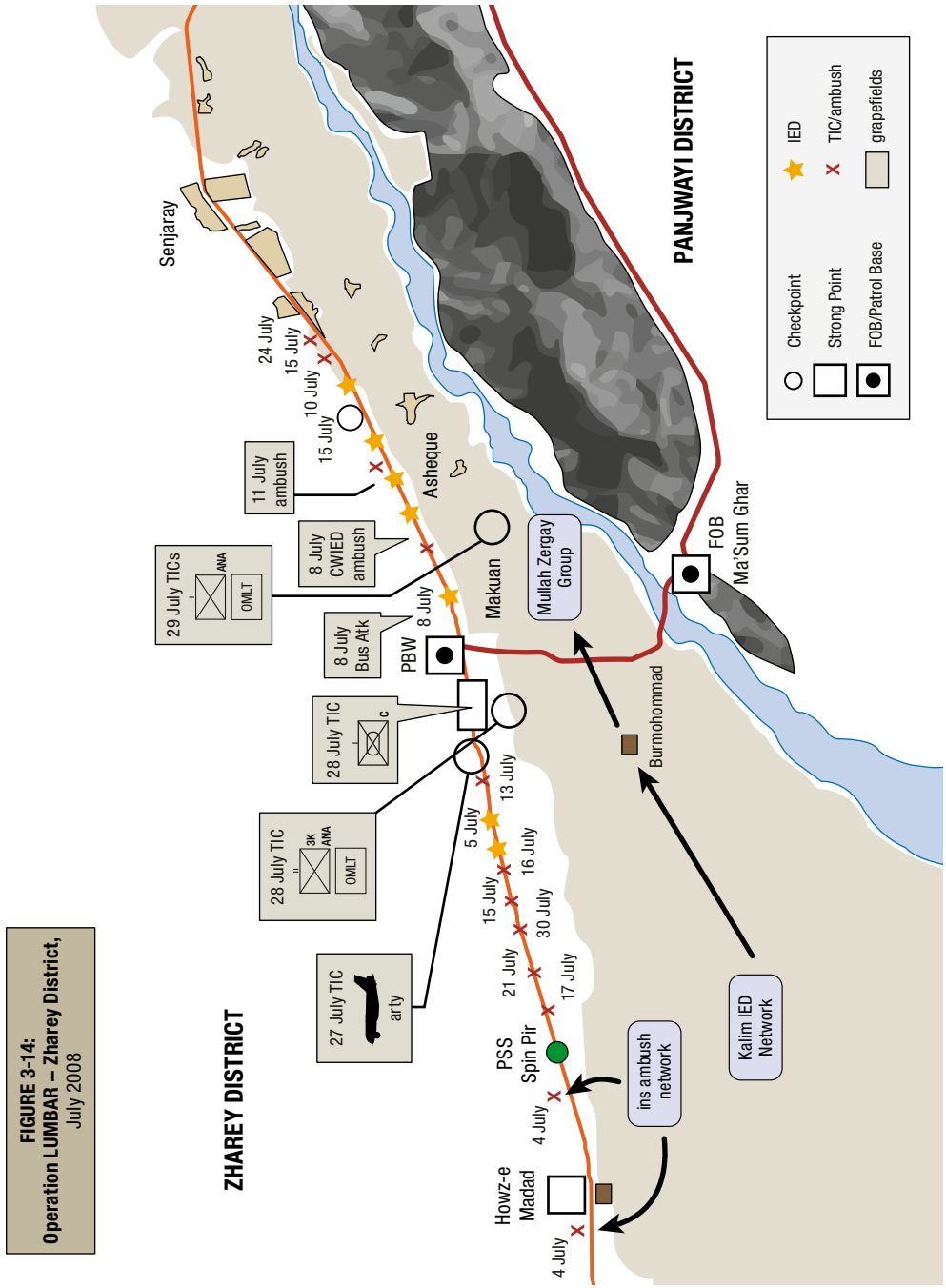


Figure 3-14: Operation LUMBAR – Zharey District, July 2008

if there were enough police in Zharey District to handle the task. They lacked armoured vehicles, as did the Afghan army. Some means of establishing a police-army patrol matrix had to be found through the Joint District Coordination Centre, if possible.

Operation LUMBAR eventually consisted of several elements. The ANCOP and Afghan Uniformed Police handled vital point checks. Canadian combat engineers also conducted route patrols. OH-58D helicopters from the Banshees provided top cover to both as well as to convoys passing through the area. At the same time, ANCOP positions on Highway 1 in Asheque were improved by Canadian engineers. Finally, C Company developed a patrol plan for the area south of Patrol Base Wilson, while special operations forces elements came in at night for covert surveillance. (See Figure 3-15.)

From 27 July to 24 August, there were only four IED attacks and no ambushes against Highway 1 vehicle traffic in the Operation LUMBAR operating area. None of these were against resupply convoys.[338] There were, however, several actions. The first was on 27 July when a Sperwer TUAV spotted an ambush team, which was then engaged with M-777 artillery fire. The next day, Afghan troops and the OMLT engaged the enemy south of Highway 1, while C Company did the same. LAV III 25mm cannon fire, artillery and close air support killed around eight insurgents. Two Afghan companies and their OMLT mentors launched a hasty cordon and search operation into Asheque after two policemen were kidnapped and taken to Makuan. There, an enemy force with mortars and skirmishing engaged them in a firefight that lasted nearly two hours. The forward air controllers were unable to bring close air support and artillery to bear, so the Canadians and Afghans withdrew. Makuan remained hot, and there was concern that the locals had some grievance with the police and took them to the Taliban for adjudication.[339]

Operation LUMBAR measures continued to produce contact so the operation was extended to mid-August. C Company patrolling south of Patrol Base Wilson resulted in two major contacts, both of which drew in artillery and close air support, while the Afghan police and the Army had two large contacts east of Patrol Base Wilson on the highway. In all cases, there were enemy casualties with no coalition casualties. The Taliban, who had deliberate intent to shoot down a coalition helicopter with a dedicated team, ambushed the Banshees in their OH-58Ds. These attacks occurred on two occasions, so the Banshees baited a trap and then unloaded a B-1B bomber onto the Taliban ambush force south of Howz-e Madad on 13 August, taking out all of the heavy machine gun teams. Six days later, an IED dig team was observed at night by C Company and special operations forces. The dig team engaged with a variety of bombs and missiles until they were all dead.[340]

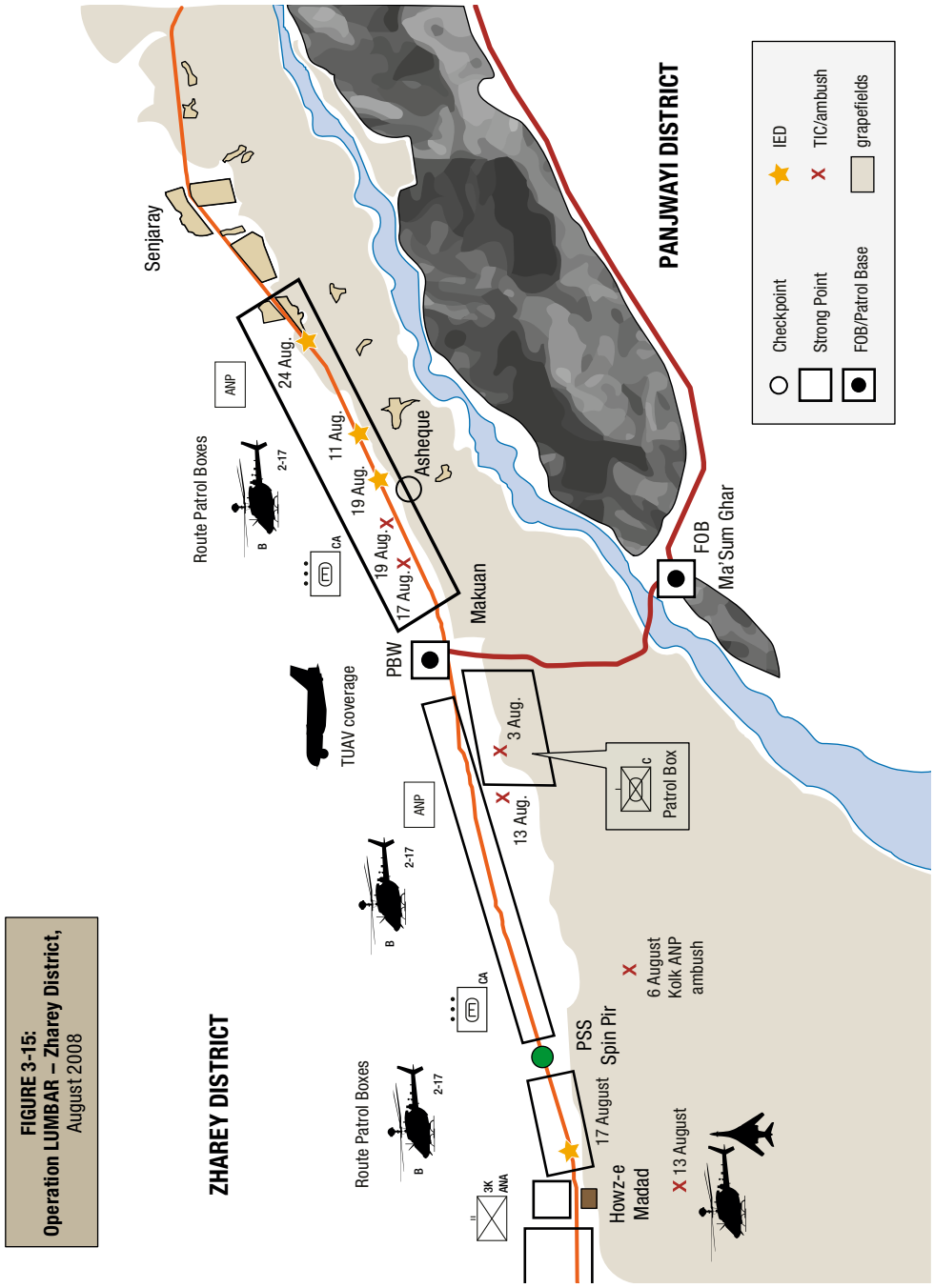


Figure 3-15: Operation LUMBAR – Zharey District, August 2008

Operation LUMBAR was successful in that it helped TF Kandahar and Regional Command (South) regain the initiative and freedom of movement on Highway 1. This was only a temporary state of affairs, however, and subsequent operations were required to build on it.

Operations in Panjwayi District, July–August 2008

Haji Baran's cry for help with eastern Panjwayi in late June was answered in early July. Analysis determined that the community of Salavat was a node that, if agitated, might stimulate enemy activity and help define the threat. Regional Command (South) brought in a British Para company from the Regional Battle Group (South) for Operation SOTAK [Sledgehammer]. A straightforward operation, an operations box around Salavat was established with part of C Company blocking along Fosters East, TUAV coverage along Lake Effect, and an Afghan army company and police plus Recce Platoon from the battle group to the west. On the morning of 1 July, Royal Navy Sea King helicopters (the same vintage as Canadian Sea Kings) air-assaulted the 3 Para company accompanied by Afghan police, Canadian P-OMLT and National Directorate of Security personnel into landing zones southeast of the community. Back at the battle group Tactical Operations Centre, the staff directed a MQ-1 Predator to follow a group of four insurgents trying to get away. They were engaged with a Hellfire and an OH-58D helicopter that came on station engaged the survivors. There was sporadic firing at an intelligence team but no further contact. Exploitation of the compounds in Salavat produced an IED factory and a first aid post but no insurgents.[341]

BGen Thompson determined in early July that the time was right to initiate Operation HUNDA [Wolf], the establishment of Stability Box Sperwan. Preliminary patrols conducted by B Company, the Afghan army and the mentors in the first week in July helped gain better definition of the area. Operation LEWE interrupted this process. By late July, several Sperwan locals who were declared Taliban fighters presented themselves to the district leader and asked to reintegrate into Afghan society. This was a positive sign.[342] On the other hand, CIMIC teams concluded that "It is disturbing that the villagers see themselves as not involved in the conflict, merely bystanders. Their overriding interest appears to be staying neutral, and not attracting either Taliban or ISAF/ANSF fire."[343] TF Kandahar and the battle group then gave attention to establishing a police station in Sperwan. The problem with this proposition was the chronic lack of police. With the shift of focus to Kandahar City after Sarposa, 30 trained police were pulled out of Panjwayi and sent into the city. This severely curtailed patrols in Panjwayi East. Though the P-OMLT and CIVPOL did everything they could, the numbers just did not lie. When the insurgents mounted an attack from Salavat against the Salehan checkpoint, the remaining police in the district

refused to leave their stations. Kandahar superiors then told the chief of police that he had permission to recruit 75 local people, but they would have no training. Despite all attempts at Focused District Development, Panjwayi was now back to square one for policing.[344]

As for CMT-1, the Route Fosters paving project stalled out. The material for making the road using manual labour had not arrived and a significant level of intimidation was directed against the workers. Haji Baran was "adamant that the rest of the paving project should be undertaken by heavy equipment and completed as quickly as possible to prevent any more injuries or deaths due to IEDs….Many locals are openly stating that since so much money has been spent on the project with not much to show, the local leaders and shura representatives must be stealing the money and that for the same reasons, Canadians are corrupt…."[345]

At the same time, the combat outposts had their disconnected local operations styled into Operation KORBA in three iterations in July–August. The Tactical Deep Fight was also superimposed on top of KORBA.[346] B Company had no manoeuvre capability. There were partially-manned platoons in the combat outposts: their numbers were reduced because of the leave plan. Maj Mike Lane could call on Maj Chris Adams and B Squadron for QRFs if required, but because of the IED threat, these had to be large deliberate operations.[347]

The infantry patrols sortied out into the summer heat from the combat outposts in Talukan, Zangabad and Haji. There were daily contacts made by these platoons for an entire month in and around the combat outposts along Route Fosters, so numerous that they cannot all be detailed here.[348] In one case, an ISAF Contract Air Transport Support Mi-17 helicopter took fire and dropped its resupply load south of COP Zangabad. One Canadian section established itself in overwatch, while another manoeuvred on the sling load. The enemy collapsed their ambush and went after the overwatch section. As they were doing so, they crossed in front of the manoeuvring section and a firefight broke out. The entire village appeared to open up on the Canadian platoon and more fighters poured out to flank and cut off the Canadians. With artillery support denied, taking fire from six different directions, and the route to the outpost about to be cut off, the platoon conducted a fighting withdrawal over nearly 2 kilometres. As they were pursued, the enemy reinforced the fight with even more fighters and moved to cut off the platoon from the outpost, which forced Lt McMichael's platoon to dig in at the intersection. A pair of OH- 58D Warrior helicopters arrived on station and started to empty their .50-calibre machine guns and rocket pods onto the enemy, who dispersed. The platoon arrived at COP Zangabad and refilled their ammunition pouches. LCol Corbould called Lt McMichael and ordered him not to go back in.[349] This was an example of just one of several firefights in the horn of Panjwayi during this period.

The local populations remained intimidated and there were few incentives available to influence them otherwise. The enemy started laying anti-personnel mines and IEDs to limit the patrol's zones of influence and, on occasion, the insurgents conducted ambushes. During the course of these operations in July, Pte Colin Wilmott, a medic from 1 Field Ambulance, and Cpl James Arnal, from B Company, were killed in separate incidents involving mines.

In another contact, Cpl Tyler Myroniuk and WO Robin Crane were on patrol with Afghan troops operating southeast of COP Haji on 4 August, when they were ambushed. With four wounded soldiers, the Afghans and Canadians adopted an all around defence and called for close air support. Despite marking the target with an M-72, the aircraft could not gain positive identification and would not engage. The enemy, now estimated to include 30 insurgents, pressed their attack. Myroniuk and Crane, running out of ammunition and down to lobbing grenades, were finally able to call in M-777 fire, break contact, and withdraw with the wounded to Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar. Both men were decorated with the Medal of Military Valour for their actions.

On 12 August, the enemy mounted a coordinated attack against COP Haji. A volley of RPGs took out the observation tower and heavy fire was directed against the position.

With a dust storm rolling in, a Sperwer TUAV was launched to get "eyes on" for the battle group Tactical Operations Centre team. M-777 artillery was also called in. A B-1B was orbiting the area, waiting for "trade" from Maj Hamel. Two pairs of guided bomb units were dropped on separate insurgent groups firing at COP Haji. After the second pair detonated, enemy firing ceased. Battle damage assessment came in at ten enemy dead. Unfortunately, MCpl Erin Doyle was killed in the initial assault on the position.[350]

On the whole, it was extremely difficult for the Canadians in Panjwayi to gain any traction be it policing, governance, or on the development and reconstruction front. The whole process was mired in the competition between the Dastagiri Group and Haji Baran and his supporters over control of contracting and the distribution of humanitarian aid in the district. Baran claimed the District Development Assembly/Community Development Council system was totally controlled by the Dastagiri Group, while others claimed that Baran was financially benefiting from the Fosters paving project by getting tribute from the workers. Some claimed that both entities were selling UN-provided humanitarian aid in the bazaars. Baran claimed that the Dastagiri Group was simply waiting the current rotation out before allowing the shura members it controlled back into district meetings. The Dastagiri Group claimed they were boycotting the meetings because of Baran's corruption. When CIMIC talked to regular people, they were told "that the Shura members were all corrupt and there is no point taking their problems to them." This, in effect, ceded the ground to the Taliban and its emergent court in the Zangabad area, who promised swift dispute resolution.[351]

Simply put, government legitimacy in Panjwayi was so completely compromised that development was not possible. Without real development, there could be no Build, and in any event, the district was not "cleared." Canadian and Afghan troops and police were essentially holding the line in isolated spots throughout the district, waiting for those responsible for the governance portfolio to grip the situation and sort it out. Unfortunately, for those fighting in Panjwayi, those people were focused on projects like the Dahla Dam and the new priority, Kandahar City.

The Battle for Strongpoint Mushan, June–August 2008

The decision to withdraw from COP Talukan left Strong Point Mushan, more or less, surrounded. The only means to resupply Mushan was by ground convoy, led by B Squadron's Leopard tanks, or by CDS drop from one of the C-130 Hercules transports. Contracted helicopter support refused to go anywhere near the positions on Route Fosters. At the same time, there were intelligence reports that the presence of Strong Point Mushan was having a deleterious effect on enemy freedom of movement not just in and around the bazaar itself, but in the whole horn of Panjwayi and in Zharey.[352] (See Figure 3-16.)

Operation TOORAH AZADI II brought more coalition forces into Mushan. Patrols pushed out and ran into complex ambushes, including a three-sided ambush on 31 May that the OMLT and the Afghan infantry shot their way out of with help from B Battery's M-777s at Sperwan Ghar. In early June, almost every patrol departing Strong Point Mushan was involved in a contact. Mortars were also against the position on occasion. On a positive side, these patrols made contact with the Mushan community and built up substantial good will, so much so that ISTAR systems picked up enemy complaints that the population was in danger of shifting toward supporting the government.

On 10 June, the insurgents mounted a significant action against the Afghan 1st Company and the Canadian mentors as they sortied out to protect the bazaar. Three enemy groups converged on Mushan bazaar and the strong point, engaging two platoon-sized patrols with small-arms fire and the strong point with 82mm fire. The Afghan troops and Canadian mentors fought back and were able to call in a pair of F-15s and contact B Battery. A Sperwer TUAV joined in, tracking enemy movements. WO John McNabb, who had no training as a forward air controller, was able to contact the F-15s: they subsequently bombed the insurgent positions. As the enemy retreated, they were engaged with 155mm artillery fire in the open. Afghan patrols later found the body parts of 15 insurgents hidden in culverts.

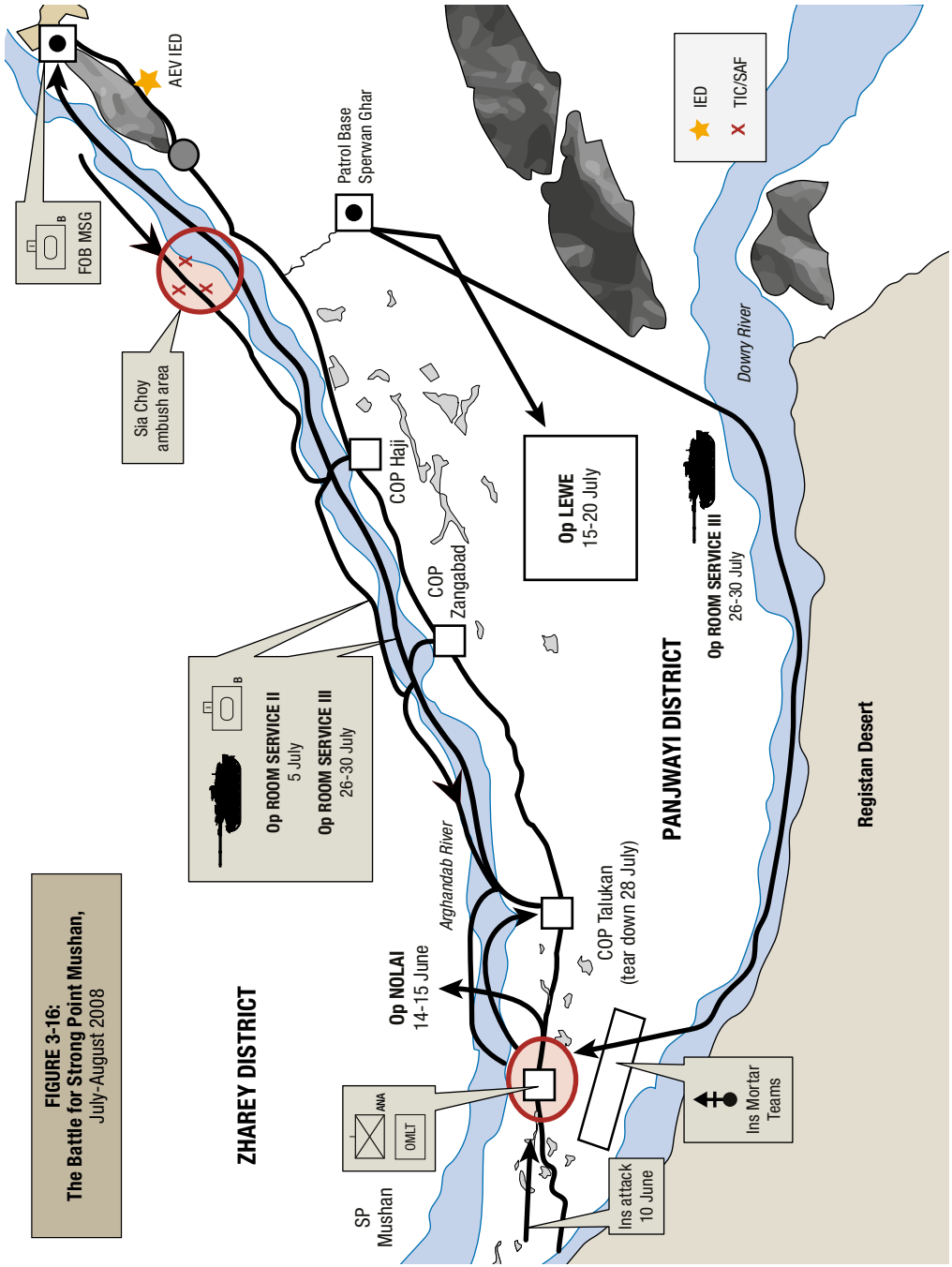


Figure 3-16: The Battle for Strong Point Mushan, July-August 2008

Photo Credit: DND AR2009-Z051-06

Afghan troops and a Canadian supply convoy come under contact during Operation ROOM SERVICE, a "river run" down the Arghandab riverbed to Strong Points Talukan and Mushan, which were held by Afghan troops and Canadian OMLT personnel.

Strong Point Mushan played a role in Operation NOLAI (see above) on 14 and 15 June, pushing platoons north of the Arghandab River and engaging in several firefights. The Taliban's response came on 27 June. For the next three days, Strong Point Mushan and its defenders were subjected to a high volume of small-arms fire and mortar bombardment. The Afghan troops moved their machine-gun equipped Ford Rangers to the run-up positions and fired until their barrels nearly overheated. The Canadian mentors pulled out their 84mm Carl Gustav and fired rocket-assisted projectiles at the enemy. A Taliban mortar finally nailed the Afghan 60mm mortar, seriously wounding its operator.

B Squadron arrived on 5 July during Operation ROOM SERVICE II. The combat team departed Ma'Sum Ghar on 5 July and was immediately engaged from the north bank of the Arghandab near Sia Choy. 25mm fire from B Company's LAV IIIs supressed the enemy, killing three. A Leopard then threw a track, forcing a long halt for repairs. An enemy force attacked the column and retreated using "shoot and scoot" tactics: they were tracked by a Sperwer TUAV and engaged with M-777 fire. At 0914, the combat team breached into Zangabad while under contact by enemy teams firing RPG and small arms from a fortified compound. With OH-58D helicopters observing for "squirters"

a Badger AEV and a Leopard 2A6M breached the complex wall and a platoon from B Company cleared the compound.[353] There was no contact at COP Talukan and, after resupply, the combat team moved on to Mushan, where an orbiting OH-58D engaged and killed four insurgents as the column went into a leaguer. As 2nd Company and B Squadron breached in from the river, they were greeted with 82mm mortar fire. The relief in place and resupply was conducted under fire. The Afghan company and Canadian mentors sortied out on a series of patrols into the bazaar and bagged a number of insurgents. As it turned out, one was a mortar specialist. The two Badger AEVs had to be repaired before the column left Mushan on 7 July and headed back toward COP Zangabad. B Squadron and 1st Company returned to Ma'Sum Ghar but were engaged all the way back by insurgents in Zharey. The Leopard 2A6M's 120mm guns made short work of the RPG teams while the Afghans dismounted and fought back along the riverbed. Eventually, the fire slacked off and the combat team reached FOB Ma'Sum Ghar.[354]

Strong Point Mushan's new occupants pushed patrols into the bazaar but encountered insurgents every time they emerged. For the month of July, there were 14 separate contacts involving small-arms fire, RPGs and mortars, mostly in combination directed at the strong point and its defenders. In one of these engagements, Capt Slade Lerch directed .50-calibre machine gun fire and gave corrections to MWO Rod Dearing and his 60mm mortar crew, while MCpl John Prior fired the 25mm in his LAV III directed from a tower by MCpl Todd Woods. During this action, another Taliban mortar specialist was killed. Multiple Afghan soldiers were wounded in these actions: they were evacuated by UH-60s covered by the Banshees' OH-58Ds.

Strong Point Mushan continued to hold. B Squadron and B Company mounted Operation LEWE [Big Dog] on 15–20 July into the Zangabad communities south of the combat out post. There were multiple objectives. The idea was to activate the enemy's early warning system and get it to fixate on Operation LEWE movements so that ISTAR assets could collect to prepare for subsequent operations involving the removal of COP Talukan and the resupply of Mushan. At the same time, enemy pressure on Strong Point Mushan need to be drawn off. The forces moved out with the intention of being visible; the tanks went over land past Sperwan Ghar and conducted a range, while B Company surged patrols into the Zangabad communities. B Company platoons were sporadically engaged with "shoot and scoot" tactics but there were no casualties. MQ-1 Predators were unable to engage because of the close terrain and proximity of friendly forces on the ground.[355]

At the end of July, B Squadron combat team returned on Operation ROOM SERVICE III,[356] bringing in 1st Company to replace 2nd Company. A Badger AEV hit an IED less than 500 metres from FOB Ma'Sum Ghar. When the column headed south

of Sperwan Ghar to the Dori River, the AHSVS and the RG-31 vehicles bogged down in the sandy banks, forcing the Leopards to pull them out. One tank, strained by the effort, suffered an engine fire and was disabled. It took nearly the entire day to reach Mushan.[357]

The force leaguered and resupplied the strong point while the combat engineers made defensive improvements and added a helicopter pad. As the Leopards leaguered, they were hit with mortars. UAVs spotted the mortar positions: One crew was able to take out an enemy team with 120mm tank fire while U.S. Marine Corps F-18s engaged and destroyed the ones that could not be hit with direct fire. B Squadron pulled out on 28 July and headed for Talukan. On arrival, the breach was attacked with a flurry of small arms and RPG fire, with the Leopards engaging enemy positions with 120mm fire. The Badgers made short work of COP Talukan by 1300 and the force proceeded to COPs Zangabad and Haji, where they were mortared again. After resupply was completed, B Squadron was ambushed at Sia Choy with every weapon in the insurgent inventory. Focusing on the Afghan Ford Rangers and the EROC suite, insurgent 82mm recoilless rifle fire disabled a Husky EOD vehicle. 120mm and 105mm fire drove the ambush back and the force made "landfall" at FOB Ma'Sum Ghar later that day.[358]

Patrolling continued from Strong Point Mushan as the Afghan troops and the Canadian mentors protected the bazaar and its population. It is clear that the insurgents were increasingly perturbed with the existence of Strong Point Mushan. They threw scarce resources like their mortar teams at it, and lost significant numbers of fighters in the process. B Squadron was no longer losing vehicles to IEDs because it avoided Route Fosters in order to resupply Mushan. The population was starting to favour the government. As a result, the enemy sent a delegation of "elders" to Bazaar-e Panjwayi to convince Haji Baran to have the strong point removed. This ploy was unsuccessful, and the mortars started up again.

ROOM SERVICE III, however, deposited a Light Counter Mortar Radar System at the strong point. It was now put to good use. Data from the system were fed back to B Battery at FOB Sperwan Ghar and the enemy started to lose mortar systems to artillery fire. The situation was so dire that the insurgents resorted to using young non-combatants to drop the mortar bombs into the tube after the insurgent mortar specialist laid in the weapons and departed the area. In time, the Taliban stopped sending mortar teams south of the Arghandab River.

By the end of summer, Strong Point Mushan remained solidly in Afghan and Canadian hands and these forces continued to develop their relationship with the Mushan community. The enemy's attempts to force the coalition forces to abandon this position completely failed and they expended significant resources to challenge it. Those resources were not able to be directed against Stability Box JUNO and SPERWAN. The question for TF Kandahar now was what to do with Mushan. It was a successful disrupt operation but it needed CIMIC

attention, possibly development resources. Could those resources be provided without a sustainable resupply route? And, with the PRT focused on Kandahar City and Dahla Dam, was there a real possibility of reinforcing success in Mushan? These questions could only be answered in fall 2008 when TF Kandahar paused to reassess the overall situation.

Ramrod Reinforcements: 2-2 Infantry, August 2008

American deliberations in the wake of the NATO summits and the Manley Report resulted in the decision to deploy an infantry battalion under command of JTF Afghanistan. The unit selected for this was 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment (2-2 Infantry), led by LTC Dan Hurlbut. The Ramrods, a light infantry battalion, were flown into Kandahar Airfield late in July with a minimum of equipment. The battalion's parent brigade was operating in Regional Command (East) but, in the words of one 2-2 Infantry officer, his battalion "was orphaned by its own system." There was no intelligence or operations briefing from its parent headquarters. 2-2 Infantry had no training to drive or fire the RG-31 or RG-33 or MRAP vehicles it was given. The battalion had no enablers: no engineers, counter-IED, UAVs or integral logistics. In effect, 1 000 Americans arrived at KAF, walked up to TF Kandahar, and announced they were here to join the fight in Kandahar Province.[359]

LTC Hurlbut and his staff worked closely with TF Kandahar to define an area of operations and to prepare their troops. The decision was made to deploy 2-2 Infantry to Maywand District as soon as possible. Crash courses in driving and firing were conducted for the first two weeks of August with Canadian help, while the battalion acclimatized to the heat and dust. 2-2 Infantry lacked defensive stores, so these were provided from Canadian stocks. American and Canadian combat engineers prepared the ground west of Hutal for the main 2-2 Infantry camp. On 16 August, three infantry companies and the Headquarters Company deployed to a bare patch of ground that would over time be called FOB Ramrod. The Americans were greeted with a shower of rockets from the insurgents that night.[360]

2-2 Infantry's deployment to Maywand solved a number of problems for both TF Kandahar and Regional Command (South). The endless "mowing the lawn" in that area could stop and, with a better sustained presence, the Band-e Timor ratline would be easier to disrupt with "knock on" effects in Zharey and Panjwayi Districts. Anything that produced friction into the enemy system in those districts was a useful proposition. At the same time, Maywand was heating up with IED attacks along Highway 1, the vital main service route to Helmand and trade route to Herat. Was this because of increased presence by 2-2 Infantry or was it because the enemy were resurgent in the district? Only time would tell. And 2-2 Infantry was not fully operational yet in Maywand.

Photo Credit: Author

After the release of the Manley Report, which recommended deployment of another battalion-sized unit to Kandahar Province, the United States agreed to deploy 2-2 Infantry under Canadian command. Here the members of 2-2 Infantry familiarize themselves with their RG-33 vehicles prior to moving out to Maywand District.

Operation TARGAK: Arghandab Deteriorates, July–August 2008

The Taliban commanders for Arghandab and Khakrez, Mullah Mahmood and Mullah Shakur respectively, had a problem. Mahmood was recovering from the tender mercies of Operation DAOR BUKHOU when he decided to infiltrate Arghandab as a precursor for another incursion. He wanted Shakur to back him, but Shakur was wary. At this point, Maj Boivin's Recce Squadron troops were operating out of FOB Frontenac and had a command post at the district centre. There were several unmentored Afghan National Army platoons in three positions throughout the district, and the Arghandab police were back on patrol. Word came in through CIMIC and police sources that Shakur made a deal with the Khakrez District authorities whereby the district leadership would turn a blind eye toward his activities. Subsequently, the population in lower Shah Wali Kot was subjected to an information operations campaign and the insurgent message was, "We're coming." The first anti-tank mine/homemade explosive IED combination was discovered by a police patrol and then FOB Frontenac was mortared twice. The ASIC was not sure whether this was misdirection or not but concluded that Arghandab was going to be infiltrated while the enemy tried to focus coalition attention on lower Shah Wali Kot.[361]

Mullah Mahmood was positively identified by Canadian ISTAR systems and the ASIC while moving between Shah Wali Kot and Khakrez. With an MQ-9 Reaper on station and, with no civilians present in the area, BGen Thompson authorized a precision strike with Hellfire missiles and MGen Lessard at Regional Command (South) supported this decision. The deputy commander of ISAF, however, countermanded the strike and authorized direct fire only. After an agonizing wait, a pair of A-10s came online and flew to the target area, making gun runs on the compound housing Mahmood and his staff. Four insurgents were killed, one of which was Mahmood.[362]

Mahmood elimination stalled what would likely have been a replay of operations INTIZAAR ZMAREY and DAOR BUKHOU. The Taliban were forced to bring in new leaders from Pakistan, who formulated a new approach. In early August, the insurgents concocted an intimidation plan designed to target government supporters in Arghandab. The first kidnappings took place, and seven abductees were taken to a secret prison in Khakrez and tortured.[363] The prisoners were released and sent back into Arghandab to frighten the population. Night letters appeared on every mosque door in the district. An Arghandabi told Canadians that "the security problem in Arghandab could not get better now because so many key leaders [from the district] have been killed."[364]

The Taliban focused on the communities occupying the hilly tri-district area north of Jelawur. Jelawur itself, loaded with members of the Ghilzai confederation, was a deepening swamp of insurgent support. The intimidation campaign facilitated insurgent infiltration into these areas.

The ANSF situation in Arghandab was alarming. None of the Afghan army sub-units were mentored and there appeared to be little coordination with the Arghandab police. The police themselves were somewhat effective: they intercepted an insurgent column, shot it up and captured the survivors on one occasion. Attempts to establish permanent Afghan army strong points were not seriously pursued. The lackadaisical Afghan response to the situation was a combination of the progressive gutting of Alikozai power, the removal of General Saqib and disruption of the police at the provincial level, and the imminent removal of Governor Asadullah Khalid.

TF Kandahar hastily assembled Operation TARGAK [Storm]. It lasted four days and its purpose was "to influence the ANSF to play a more active role in providing a secure environment in the Arghandab District." Three organizations were thrown at the task, with no intelligence as to what was happening in the district. The Canadian OMLT sent Maj Chris Comeau in a Bison to Tabin to work with the Afghan infantry company located there. Recce Squadron increased its patrolling in upper Arghandab and escorted TF 77, the Lithuanian special operations forces platoon, into the Tabin area. From there, TF 77 and the Afghan army company mounted an aggressive night patrol schedule to throw off the insurgents. Enemy activity completely dropped off when the TARGAK force moved in.[365]

After the coalition forces left, however, the insurgents burned a school in Babur. This was followed by a flood of night letters. More local leaders were abducted, tortured, and released back into their communities. On 23 August, police checkpoints came under direct attack, leaving six insurgents dead and one policeman killed. By the end of the month, the first IEDs were found on Route Oregon. Operation TARGAK was not enough. The population in Arghandab now feared for their lives at night and they were virtually leaderless.[366] A more systematic approach to Arghandab was required but where were the forces going to come from?

Operation ASP-E JANUBI: August 2008

The deteriorating mechanical situation at the ageing Kajaki Dam in Helmand Province and its relationship to the sporadic power outages in Kandahar City evolved into a high-profile problem throughout 2008. The inability of the Afghan government to deliver a basic service had obvious negative psychological effects but repairing a huge system like Kajaki Dam in the middle of a war was a daunting task. For the most part, the Kajaki problem was not a Canadian one. That said, KAF was the main logistical hub for Regional Command (South), and the lines of communications from KAF to Kajaki passed through the TF Kandahar operating area. In addition, Regional Command (South) was commanded by a Canadian general.

It fell to MGen Lessard and his staff to handle the security aspects of what became known as Operation ASP-E JANUBI. Unofficially dubbed Operation "Ass Pain Janubi,"[367] the Regional Command (South) plan involved the movement of the huge components of a power turbine from KAF through contested territory in two different provinces controlled by two different task forces, safely to Kajaki.

The magnitude of the operation was matched by the size of the components. When the turbine machinery arrived at KAF from China by contracted AN-124 transport, it was too large to be moved by heavy-lift helicopter to Helmand. A multi-wheeled low-bed tractor trailer was used for the largest and heaviest of the pieces. Knowledge of the importance of the turbine and its arrival in KAF by the enemy was assumed. The question was how to get the convoy to Kajaki safely. Part of the operation even prohibited photographs of the components themselves.

As we will recall from Volume I, Highway 611 up to Sangin from Highway 1 was an IED death trap and had been for years as the British sought to resupply the forward operating base there. The dam itself was under fire regularly. But then, there was Zharey District, where Highway 1 was a potential shooting gallery as the convoy passed through it. The Regional Command (South) planners ultimately coordinated a series of task force

level operations designed to draw off enemy activity along the routes before the turbine convoy passed by. One of these involving TF Kandahar was Operation TIMUS PREEM (for the details see below).

There were other activities synchronized with ASP-E JANUBI. The idea that the anticipated movement of the convoy by the enemy would activate their own coordination methodology was not lost on the planners. It was possible that special operations forces could go after the leadership of enemy cells and groups and take them out when this information revealed itself. Other insurgent forces that were in a position to engage the convoy could also be attacked using a variety of methods as well.[368]

That is essentially what happened. The turbine convoy moved out from the airfield and passed down Highway 1 through Zharey without incident. Route remediation by the engineers occurred right afterwards. The handover line was in Maywand District. Instead of proceeding down to Highway 611 to the west in Helmand however, the convoy and its escorts veered north, passed through the Garmabak Pass into Ghorak District, northwest into Helmand Province and then on to the dam area. (See Figure 3-17.)

There were so many aerial engagements against insurgent forces along the route that Regional Command (South) Joint Operation Centre was overwhelmed. TF 71, working in the Ghorak area, was involved in a substantial number of strikes as the surprised insurgents tried to react to the convoy. And, on the return, the escort convoy took heavy fire at the handover line, which generated even more targets for a variety of forces and systems. The number of enemy personnel destroyed during Operation ASP-E JANUBI was estimated to be several hundred and the amount of information on the insurgent networks in both provinces was deemed invaluable.[369] The formal Regional Command (South) analysis in November 2008 was understated: "The period since August 2008 has seen the levelling off of violence which had previously been an upward trend. The turbine 2 (Operation ASP-E JANUBI) move has had an effect on the enemy both in writing down their overall strength and in their visible inability against superior ISAF forces."[370]

Operation TIMUS PREEM and Operations in Zharey District, August 2008

While the turbine was inbound, operational focus shifted to Zharey District once again. Operation JANGISIOUX brought Maj Stacey Grubb and C Company to bear in a series of disrupt and manoeuvre-to-collect incursions. These incursions were conducted from 5 to 8 August, with the first one going in near Abdullahkhan, where a patrol base was established on 6 August. Patrols went out and conducted key leadership engagements to define what was going on in the area. At night, Canadian platoons moved out to trigger the enemy early warning system so ISTAR resources could collect on them. A single source indicated that an enemy IED expert was in the area and preparing to lay IEDs.

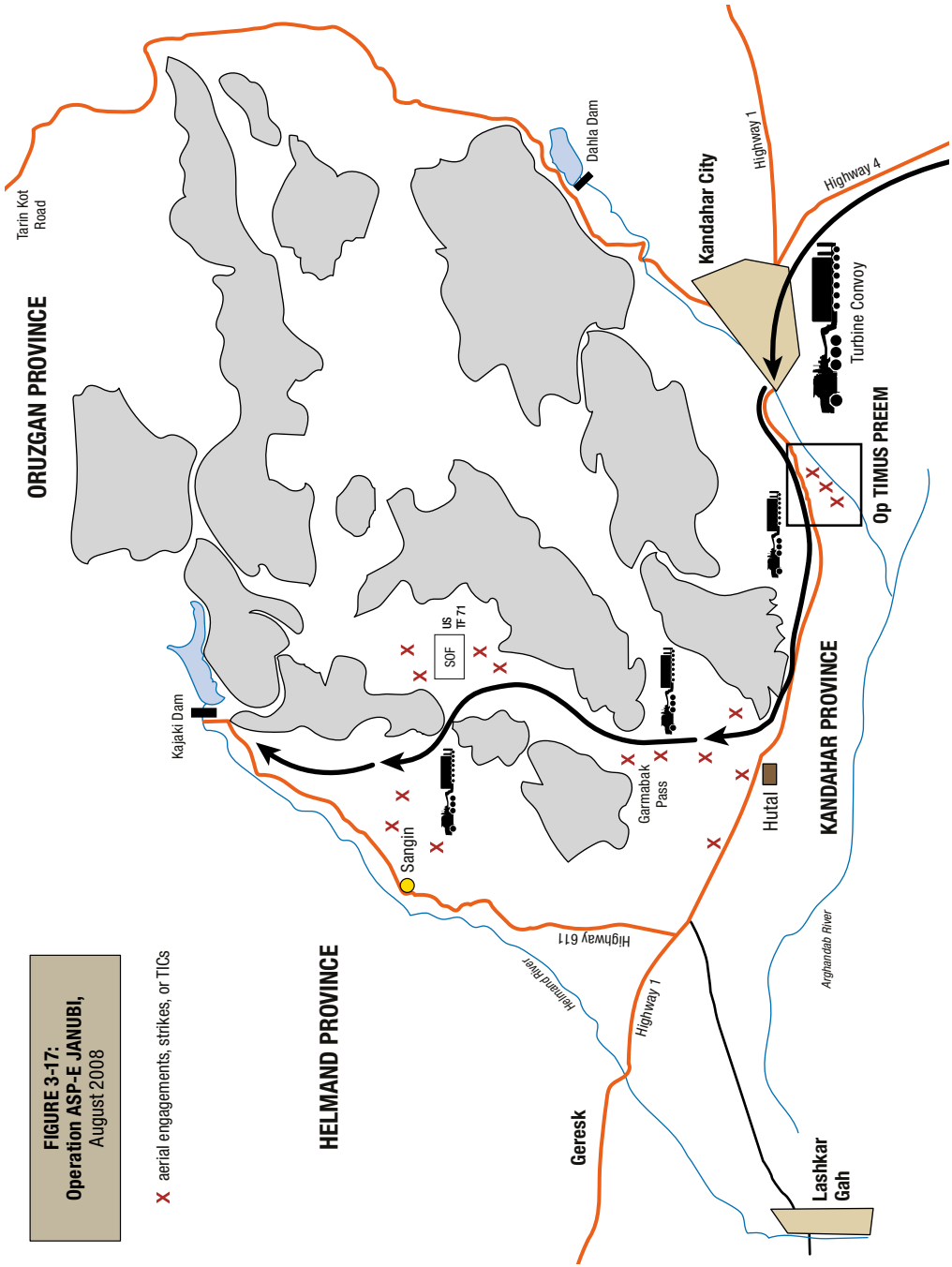


Figure 3-17: Operation ASP-E JANUBI, August 2008

A dismounted sweep went down the road to Lakokhel strong point but as the LAV IIIs manoeuvred, Maj Grubb's vehicle hit an IED, disabling it, and wounding him for the third time on this tour (after this, Maj Grubb became known as "Three Time Charlie"). The IED strike triggered an ambush, prompting the QRF to deploy, whereas a Leopard C2 detonated another device with its rollers. Firefights erupted and it took 44 155mm rounds from B Battery and close air support from U.S. Marine Corps AV-8B Harriers to break contact. Six Canadians were wounded in this action but C Company was able to extract itself and re-establish another patrol base. This strong defence of the area west of Nahlgam was a significant indicator to the ASIC that a better and more capable enemy was back in Zharey.[371]

C Company recocked on 8 August and moved just south of Spin Pir to the first wadi line. The OMLT and an Afghan patrol moved to their west. The battle group Tactical Operations Centre team, at this time, was tracking an enemy 82mm recoilless rifle team south of C Company with an UAV when C Company was engaged from the east and the south by enemy forces. The OMLT and Afghans also came under fire. At the same time, a resupply convoy escorted by a private security company was headed west on Highway 1. It thought it was being engaged by the insurgents, so they fired to the south. During this confused collection of engagements, Cpl Josh Roberts was shot and killed.[372] JANGISIOUX continued on 10 August and resulted in another contact, which was supressed and eliminated with 12 rounds of 155mm fire.[373]

Operation JANGISIOUX achieved two things. First, it produced significant enemy disruption south of Highway 1 and contributed to the objectives of Operation LUMBAR. C Company's manoeuvring also generated intelligence that fed into Operation TIMUS PREEM, which, in turn, supported Operation ASP-E JANUBI.

Operation TIMUS PREEM started off as a contingency operation on 8 August but this changed as ASP-E JANUBI drew closer. The battle group was keeping an eye on a compound complex in Zharey, designated Objective WEASEL. It appeared to be a combination of command and control node, waystation, and IED facility. From WEASEL, the insurgents operated against Pashmul, Highway 1 to the north, as well as Senjaray and against Highway 1 from there (see Figure 3-18). An operation directed against the area, essentially the same area where Operation NOLAI was conducted back in June, would theoretically attenuate the insurgents' ability to interfere with the turbine move, disrupt their operations in Sanjeray, and, incidentally, buy time for Stability Box JUNO to grow.[374]

ISTAR reportage that Taliban commander and IED man Jabar Agha and two other commanders were located in Objective WEASEL was a key factor in unleashing Operation TIMUS PREEM on 20 August. By this time, the forces for the operation were allocated: a company from 3rd Kandak and its mentors; two companies from 1st Kandak with mentors;

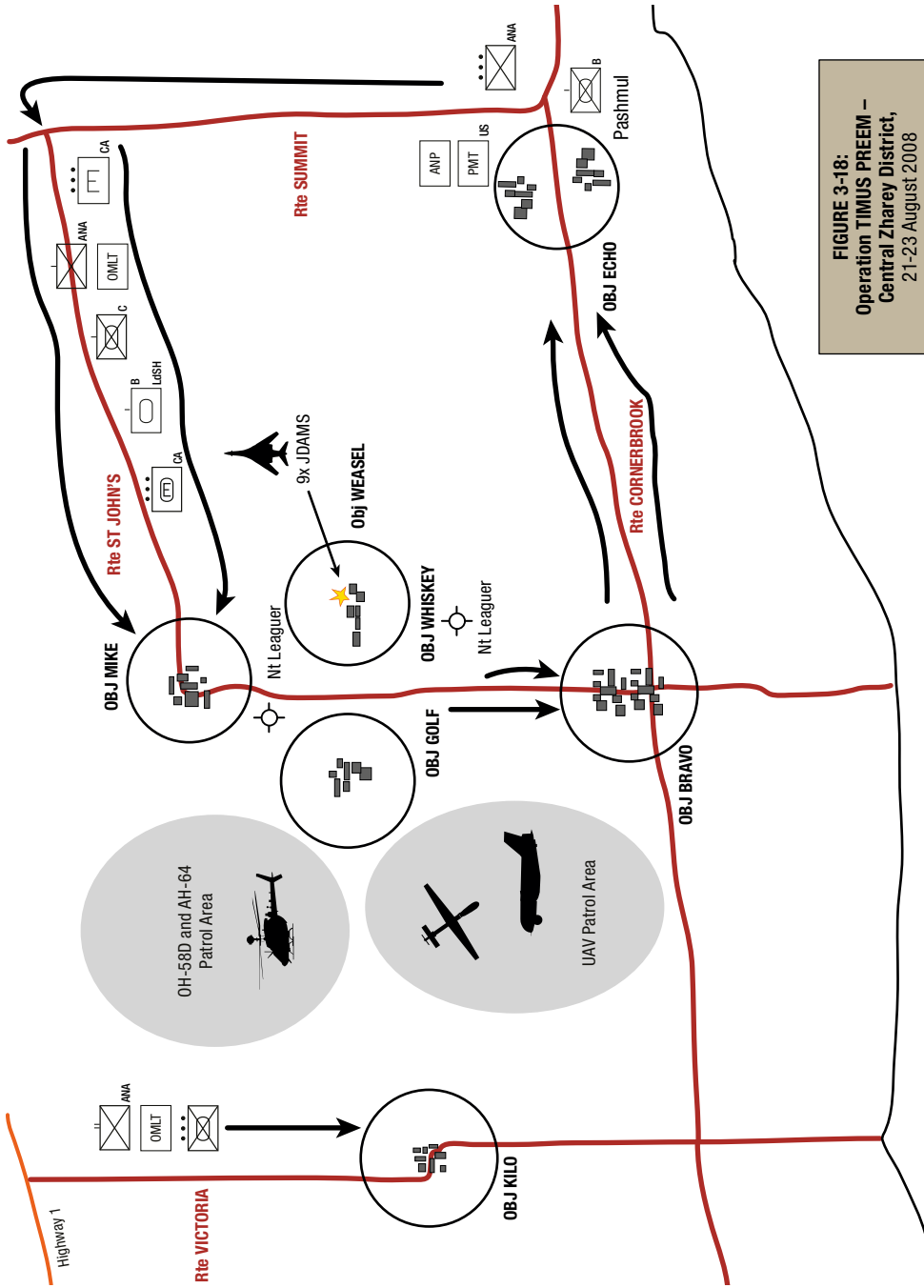


Figure 3-18: Operation TIMUS PREEM – Central Zharey District, 21-23 August 2008

Afghan police and their mentors; B Company; C Company; and B Squadron. For comparative purposes, Operation TIMUS PREEM was larger than Operation MEDUSA and operated in roughly the same area, but had no political interest directed at it and virtually no media coverage. The enemy in 2008 also operated differently from the insurgents encountered in 2006.

TIMUS PREEM was to be initiated by an airstrike on Objective WEASEL. 3rd Kandak and mentors would strike south from Highway 1, while 1st Kandak and mentors would strike west from Route Summit into Pashmul. This would overwhelm the enemy's command and control system and their early warning system. B Squadron and C Company, plus an Afghan company and mentors, were formed into two Breach Teams, led by Badger AEVs. They would move out north along Summit, swing west, south of the wadi line, and encircle and search clusters of compound complexes over the course of three days.

The day before Operation TIMUS PREEM was to kick off, however, the combat engineer squadron suffered a catastrophic loss. An engineer recce team moving along Highway 1 as part of Operation LUMBAR struck a huge IED. The detonation flipped the vehicle upside down and threw the turret off. Sgt Shawn Eades, Cpl Dustin Wasden and Sapper Stephan Stock were all killed: another soldier was seriously wounded. Recce Platoon deployed to the site to secure it, while Maj Steve Davies from the OMLT led an unarmoured firefighting team to the site. Recovery efforts ensued, but then it was discovered that an enemy leader was attracted to the site. He was tracked by an MQ-1 Predator, but the operations centre was unable to gain positive identification. Artillery could not be used because of a Rules of Engagement issue. The enemy commander escaped death for the time being.

At 0445 hours the next morning, Breach Teams 1 and 2 departed FOB Ma'Sum Ghar. Each team consisted of a Badger AEV; a six-vehicle tank troop (combinations of six Leopard C2 and 2A6Ms per troop); an infantry platoon in LAV III; a Taurus armoured recovery vehicle; and an armoured heavy support vehicle fascine carrier for crossing ditches. An Afghan infantry company in Ford Rangers and their mentors in RG-31s fell in behind. A pair of AH-64 attack helicopters and a pair of OH-58D recce helicopters from TF Eagle Assault flew overhead. The plan was to avoid the existing road network because they were likely riddled with IEDs. Each Breach Team would plow its own road through the grape fields and mud walls to the objective area.

At 0605, the Breach Teams were in position and then they went in, Badger blades down. Leopard C2 tanks equipped with plows made "herring bone" run-ups behind the breaching Badgers; the following Leopard A26Ms and the LAV IIIs moved into these as the breach progressed. At 0634 the enemy reacted and LCol Corbould decided to release the orbiting B-1B so it could attack Objective WEASEL. Nine JDAMs were delivered, obliterating the target compounds. B Squadron got the first contact at 0637 hours and in 20 minutes every sub-unit in the Operation TIMUS PREEM force was involved in an

engagement. The tanks picked off the enemy spotters and early warning system signallers with HEAT rounds. 155mm fire missions engaged any enemy movement detected by the Sperwer TUAVs or MQ-1 Predator that was orbiting. Breach Team 1 headed for Objective MIKE. The Badger plowed a path 360 degrees around the community: the Leopards and LAV IIIs moved onto it to create a "Ring of Steel," cutting off any possible egress or reinforcements. Canadian engineers worked with the Afghan infantry and Canadian mentors to search each compound, while PSYOPS conducted key leader engagements. The enemy reacted to the incursion near ECHO and a firefight broke out. It was short: the AH-64 attack helicopters came in and took out the opposition. Over in MIKE, the joint terminal air controller was able to vector an AV-8B Harrier onto some enemy who were trying to reinforce, killing all of them. When the engineers backtracked east along the roads, they found pre-positioned chambers for IEDs, and prepared but empty fighting positions deployed in depth on each route. TIMUS PREEM pre-empted the enemy's ability to get to and fight from these well-concealed and sighted positions.

There was a lot of shooting over in Objective KILO. The Afghan infantry and Canadian mentors intercepted insurgents who were trying to laterally reinforce MIKE. At least two small counterattacks against MIKE were repelled, one of them by LCol Corbould's 9r TAC.[375] AH-64 and OH-58D helicopters spotted and engaged others. Breach Team 2 passed Objective MIKE once Breach Team 1 was set and moved on to clear a night leaguer position south of MIKE for both Breach Teams.

As Capt Tom Neil and his PSYOPS team played Blue Oyster Cult's "Don't Fear the Reaper" over their loudspeakers, the enemy attacked the night leaguer twice but were obliterated with 120mm canister fire from the tanks. ScanEagle SUAVs kept the night watch overhead. LCol Corbould had to make a decision: did the force go after Objective GOLF or Objective WHISKEY, where the rubble of the WEASEL compounds were located?

He decided to do both. By 0840 in the morning on 22 August, Breach Teams 1 and 2 plowed south, isolated the objectives with the tanks, and started cordon and search operations. The stench from the WEASEL compounds was overwhelming and there were too many body parts crushed by large amounts of rubble to do an effective battle damage assessment. It is possible that between 30 to 50 insurgents were killed in this airstrike. Several bomb production facilities were discovered, including one repurposing Canadian 155mm illumination casings into IEDs. Over in Objective KILO the Canadians and Afghans took mortar fire. The Afghans detected enemy spotters and engaged them, while the Canadian joint terminal air controller brought an AV-8B Harrier fighter-bomber to bear and destroyed the mortar team. Further exploitation of GOLF and WHISKEY uncovered large mortar, RPG and IED caches. Some of the ammunition was brand new and came from the People's Republic of China. Several radios and cell phones were also found and exploited.

The Badgers scraped the ground south of WEASEL for a night leaguer and the vehicles from the two Breach Teams filed in for the night. At last light, enemy spotters were detected and engaged. The enemy then mounted a mortar and RPG attack on the leaguer after dark. This was a suicidal move. With thermal imagery optics and 120mm canister rounds from the Leopard 2A6Ms, there was not much left except small glowing pieces seen in the Thermal Imaging sights. The melody of "Don't Fear the Reaper" continued through the night. There were two more contacts which produced the same results.

On Day 3, 23 August, LCol Corbould decided to go after Objective BRAVO. Overhead TUAV and SUAV coverage spotted women and children leaving the compounds there heading north. Among them was an insurgent commander with a radio, surrounded by children. A Leopard 2A6M crew refrained from opening fire and he escaped. Breach Teams 1 and 2 then stepped off, heading southwest. They encountered a stream, so a Badger lifted a fascine from the back of the AHSVS so that the columns could pass over it. Then the fascine was removed so that there was minimal ecological damage to the watershed. Objective BRAVO was encircled and the process started again.

By noon, there was nothing found in the BRAVO compounds. Indeed, the population was anti-Taliban for the most part. Operation TIMUS PREEM wound down. LCol Corbould ordered the teams to head east toward Route Summit. These moves were under enemy observation and the insurgents made the mistake of attacking Breach Team 2 on the way out. Tanks and Predators engaged and destroyed both ambushes. The Afghans and Canadians withdrew from KILO and ECHO and the forces returned to their previous configurations. Operation TIMUS PREEM was complete. There were no Canadian or Afghan casualties in three days of operations, but the enemy suffered at a minimum over 100 personnel killed and had their command systems and part of their IED production system attenuated. The Kajaki turbine convoys made their way west along Highway 1.

Supporting TF Kandahar Operations

LCol Casey Horlock took command of the NSE in spring 2008. This NSE rotation replaced LCol Eldaoud's personnel on a one-to-one basis, which was based on the previous NSE requirements and concept of operations. During his tenure, however, the amount of tactical infrastructure that Horlock's NSE had to support grew significantly. There were the P-OMLTs in the police sub-stations in Zharey. There were Canadian mentor teams in the Afghan strong points. The battle group initially was in FOB Frontenac, Patrol Base Wilson, FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar and Spin Boldak. Then the battle group took over the police sub-stations in Panjwayi West and renamed them combat outposts. Recce Squadron was everywhere. Arghandab was a front, as was Maywand.[376]

Photo Credit: Author

Photo Credit: Author

Photo Credit: Author

Photo Credit: Author

Photo Credit: Author

Operation TIMUS PREEM was a significant Canadian-Afghan operation launched into western Zharey District in August 2008. TIMUS PREEM had the tank squadron and armoured engineers breach in and surround the fortress-like communities so that Canadian and Afghan forces could sweep them for insurgents and their equipment.

In essence, the NSE had to adapt to the new operational style using structure based on a different operational style. That became clear to LCol Horlock and his staff once they got on the ground and started operating with the Laroche headquarters. Who "owned" the forward operating bases? The battle group? OMLT? NSE? Who was responsible for their security? Was there enough personnel and if there was not, where would they come from?[377] Ultimately, the concept of support stabilized into two distinct areas. There were the KAF-based combat service support operations: large items, contracting, national projects. The gate guard task remained, sucking away Canadian manpower despite the presence of numerous Bulgarian and Hungarian troops.[378] Second, there were combat service support operations from KAF: these were the combat logistics patrols, aerial replenishment operations and forward logistic group functions. The third grouping included combat service support operations forward, which was in effect an echelon, and combat service support from forward locations, which were tailored groupings of support at the forward operating base-level, also known as "CSS Dets.": these were located at Ma'Sum Ghar, Wilson, Sperwan Ghar, Frontenac and Spin Boldak. In the past, there would have been two separate units to handle the forward operating base and KAF-based functions, respectively. That was not going to happen given manpower restrictions, so the NSE did both.[379]

Photo Credit: Author

Photo Credit: Author

The constricted terrain in Zharey and Panjwayi Districts reduced the mobility of the eight-wheeled LAV III, especially in grape trench fields and small watercourses. The Badger armoured engineering vehicle, based on the Leopard 1 chassis, proved itself time and again in increasing the battle group's mobility while the engineers resurrected a Second World War capability: the fascine, seen here on the back of an AEV and an AHSVS.

The NSE continued to rely on "jingle truck" contractors for certain non-military items. This usually involved contracting up to 20 to 50 trucks a week. However, with the increased American presence at KAF, there was increased competition for trucking capacity and this had spin-off effects.[380] First, the costs for the NSE went up. Second, more money was supposedly pumped into the economy but the expansion of work was followed by the expansion of interest on the part of the Kandahari power structure in profiting from this area. Ahmad Wali Karzai and people associated with him, for example, held interests in several trucking companies. Political dimensions like these were not taught at the logistics school in CFB Borden.

The NSE by now shifted from the HLVW truck to the Mercedes Armoured Heavy Support Vehicle System (AHSVS). Combat logistic patrol crew confidence in the Mercedes armoured truck was high. It was fully armoured and air-conditioned. The cab was a separate protected pod. With eight wheels, the truck was survivable and highly manoeuvrable. There were wrecker, cargo, and palletized load system variants, as well as a Doll low-bed for recovery. The NSE eventually acquired 80 of these vehicles. Crew fatigue dropped significantly, which increased endurance and sortie rate. Two AHSVS were IED'd during this rotation, with no casualties. Only one was a write-off.[381]

The Electrical and Mechanical Engineers acquired LAV III-based fitter vehicles with cranes; the Buffalo ARV 3, which was based on the Leopard 2 chassis; and the AHSVS-based "BATTY" [Big Ass Tan Truck, Yo] wrecker.[382] All three vehicles significantly increased the electrical and mechanical engineer's capabilities in the field and thus extended the endurance of the battle group. "Tango Maintenance" at Ma'Sum Ghar and the NSE tank yard at KAF was also busy with a whole host of vehicle upgrades. The first was the addition of remote weapons systems to some TLAVs. The second was the implementation of the "slat armour" programme for all Canadian armoured vehicles. Slat armour, developed in the 1960s for use in Vietnam by American riverine forces, was a form of stand-off armour that deflected or detonated 82mm recoilless rifle and RPG rounds before they came into contact with the vehicles' integral armour.[383]

There were also several modifications for the Leopards. All were now equipped with electronic countermeasures. The crews now had NASCAR-like "chill suits." Another development was the addition of "Barracuda" kits: these mesh-like additions reduced the heat signature of the tanks but also reduced the amount of heat in the vehicles. A Canadian soldier came up with the idea of a turret umbrella made of the same material. These devices brought the internal temperature of the tanks down 10 to 15 degrees, which was significant in 50-degree summer heat in Afghanistan.[384] Finally, all of the Leopard 2s were repainted from green to tan. As they had in the past, the EME soldiers made all of these and more modifications to ensure the habitability and survivability of Canadian vehicles operating in Kandahar.

Photo Credit: Author

Photo Credit: Author

The need for a protected logistic vehicle in the improvised explosive device-heavy environment of Kandahar led to the acquisition and deployment of the Mercedes Armoured Heavy Support Vehicle System in 2007. It came in several versions, including a cargo and palletized loading system.

Photo Credit: Author

The decision to sell off Canadian CH-47 Chinooks in the early 1990s meant that contracted Mi-17s like this one flown by maverick ex-Soviet pilots handled resupply operations to forward Canadian bases in permissive environments.

The lack of helicopter logistics support noted in the Manley Report was only partially addressed during this rotation.[385] The initial foray into contracted civilian support was taken with the creation of the ICATS or ISAF Contract Air Transport Support office. The unwillingness of European NATO members to provide helicopter support dated back to 2003 (see Volume I). One solution was to employ contracted support. In 2008, ISAF worked through a company called SkyLink to line up six Mi-8/Mi-17 Hip transport helicopters and their crews to augment NATO transport operations in southern Afghanistan.[386] Like the "jingle trucks," the ICATS helicopters were contracted to carry non-military equipment and supplies into permissive areas. Flown by a colourful variety of expatriate ex-Soviet subjects, including some who flew in Afghanistan in the 1980s, the ICATS were inevitably dubbed "jingle air." ICATS started supporting the Canadian combat outposts in Panjwayi West by May 2008. On 1 June, an ICATS Mi-17 delivering a sling load to COP Zangabad was engaged with RPG and machine gun fire, wounding the pilot.[387] This led to a suspension of ICATS resupply until the complex legal issues of using military helicopters to escort civilian contract helicopters could be resolved.[388]

An Ignominious End for Strategic Advisory Team Afghanistan and the Replacement of Asadullah Khalid

Col Don Dixon handed SAT-A to Col Serge Labbé in August 2007. By this point, SAT-A consisted of 20 personnel spread across eight ministries of the Afghan government. Labbé, who had been a staff officer for Hillier, was *au courant* with the original need for SAT-A as expressed back in 2004 and had followed the Capstick and Dixon-led teams in their endeavours. Building on the existing relationships, the incoming SAT-A focused on reinforcing "the non-security ministries" in order to build human capacity and deliver services to the Afghan people, with an eye on long-term transition to a functional government.

The critical ministries, from Col Labbé's perspective, included the Ministry of the Interior, Energy and Water, Education, Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation. SAT-A deployed advisors to those organizations to assist with planning and process development. There was another advisor involved with inter-ministerial financing, who trained Afghans on conducting audits. This was particularly important as the international organizations and non-governmental aid organizations demanded accountability for the monies deployed to Afghanistan through the Afghan government. If these people were not satisfied, then the possibility of aid monies drying up became real and thus was a threat to the counter-insurgency effort further down in the provinces and districts.

SAT-A also remained involved with the Afghan National Development Strategy. There were a series of crucial international meetings scheduled in Paris for June in 2008 to review ANDS progress with an eye to the future. LCol Nick Martin led the effort to advise the Afghan government how to formulate responses in this extremely important dialogue. Again, without the right answers, support could dry up.

Previous SAT-A rotations had advised the Afghan government on "strategic communications." This function was formalized as the Government Media and Information Centre, a process supported by LCdr John Williston, who worked with President Karzai's spokesman, Humayun Hamidzada. The cost of running the Government Media and Information Centre was shared by Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom, a deal brokered by SAT-A. SAT-A also retained the services of a CIDA representative, and Dr. Elizabeth Speed, a defence scientist and analyst.

Labbé realized that "It was not the lack of human capacity at the central level: it was the lack of human capacity at every level." Traveling around Afghanistan, Labbé and his team confirmed that "there were some very capable young people here in Kabul. But when you go down to the provincial level, it gets watered down considerably. Especially if you go into the provinces like Oruzgan, Zabul, Helmand, Kandahar. Then when you get down to the district level, it's almost non-existent."[389] The point of main effort

became the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development, because that ministry was mandated to drill down through all three levels in ways that the other ministries were not. This, once again, involved the National Solidarity Programme and the National Area Based Programme's Provincial Development Committees, District Development Assemblies and Community Development Councils. None of the other ministries had this type of vertical integration, not even the police.[390]

Ideally, there should have been some OMLT-like organization for the Afghan civil service so that delivery and capacity could be improved. Initial Canadian forays into advising the Civil Service Commission so that the selection of civil servants could be improved ultimately collapsed and the advisors were pulled out. The commission itself consisted of 2 different organizations and it proved impossible to coordinate their agendas in any meaningful way. Attempts by the Canadian advisors to foster basic meetings for deconfliction failed. One of the reasons for the lack of headway was the presence of outside contractors. There was "a lot of professional jealousy between the various donors…all the consultants and contractors looked at [SAT-A] with incredible jealousy and hatred because we were working for free. We were offering the Afghan government a free ticket because the Canadian government was paying us, whereas these guys came in, they exact a huge fee, and very often do not deliver a hell of a lot of return." Kabul, it turned out, was flooded with technical advisors, but these people were not strategic thinkers. Many of these technocrats were unable to conceptualize high-level planning and strategic functions.[391]

The key to moving things forward remained the SAT-A approach: "We never forced anything down anybody's throat." The advisors assisted with basic issues like how to run a meeting, the establishment of procedures. The Canadian military culture was better suited to this than, say, DFAIT or CIDA. Col Labbé noted that "DFAIT can't plan a party even if their life depended on it. So how can they help a ministry plan? How can they develop a plan for the next five years? Strategic intent for the next five years for the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development or the Ministry of Energy and Water? Of course they can't, because they've never been taught to plan." (The Canadian Army has a planning culture and this is inculcated in each officer from the start of his or her career).

Indeed, one observer *au fait* with Afghan culture working in Kabul noted "that there was inherent respect given to warriors, most of the key players in Afghan government considered themselves to be warriors and proved much more amenable to advice from a soldier than a bureaucrat. This was a fact that rubbed many in the diplomatic and non-governmental organization community the wrong way."[392]

According to Labbé the main antagonists facing SAT-A were not the Taliban, Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin or Al Qaeda: they were ambassador Arif Lalani and David Mulroney. Back in Ottawa, David Mulroney believed that "SAT-A had outlived its usefulness and needed

to be better coordinated with the larger effort." SAT-A did not, in Mulroney's view, fit in with the priorities that were being generated by the Secretariat and the Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan. He also believed, furthermore, that SAT-A was "a Canadian Forces embassy to Afghanistan because they didn't have any faith in the [existing Canadian] embassy." Why was this the case? The Sproule ambassadorship period had long-term negative effects on Canadian-ISAF relations and "DFAIT was sitting on its hands." Mulroney understood the situation, if he did not sympathize with it, but in terms of providing advice to the Government of Afghanistan "you couldn't have two versions." In essence, Mulroney made it clear that Lalani was to be tough when it came to SAT-A: "I take full responsibility for that."[393]

In their first meeting, Lalani told Labbé "in polite language, that he was going to do everything he could to neutralize, to the maximum extent possible, the effects of the SAT in Afghanistan. At a time when we needed more capacities than ever."[394] Col Labbé believed that Lalani's animosity toward the team was almost personal:

> He couldn't deal with the fact that you had a bunch of officers [doing these tasks] because he hated the military. He thinks we're all dumb….At the end of the day, we were influencing at the strategic level. He was unable to do so, personally, and none of his people were able to do so because they simply did not have the background, experience, and intuition, the things that come with years and years and years of soldiering and being an officer in the Canadian Forces. Lack of experience hinders you from understanding certain basic issues which come from time and experience and just being out there and doing that.[395]

Labbé's relationship with Lalani deteriorated: "He'd start yelling; I'd walk out of his office. Two seconds later, he was on the phone to Mulroney. Then Mulroney would phone DND, the Deputy Minister Robert Fonberg,[396] and he would talk to Hillier, and Hillier would say 'Yeah, yeah, yeah.' Hillier suffered terribly. Foreign Affairs was leaking stuff to the media, trying to denigrate him and wear him down."[397] There is a hint in some circles that since SAT- A was considered to be Hillier's creation, it had to be removed to "rebalance" Hillier's relative power vis-à-vis DFAIT in Ottawa bureaucratic circles.[398]

And that is ultimately what happened. The Chief of Defence Staff, who decided that there were higher priority items to fight for in the Ottawa environment, disestablished SAT-A. Ultimately, Mulroney and Lalani won out and the Canadian Government Support Office was created. However, when DFAIT and CIDA could not get enough experienced people to man the new organization, they approached the Department of National Defence for personnel. This effort failed and the Canadian Government Support Office eventually consisted of technical advisors, not strategic advisors, including contractors and CIDA

"cooperants."[399] CGSO never achieved anywhere near the level of influence or prestige that SAT-A attained during its time, nor does it appear to have had the long-term impact that SAT-A did.

In 2009, Commander ISAF, General Stanley McChrystal, helped reconstitute some of the SAT-A functions as part of the NATO Senior Civilian Representative's Office, and Col Serge Labbé, now retired, was asked to lead it. The organization survived the transition from McChrystal to Petraeus in 2010, who formalized ISAF's relationships with the four key Afghanistan development ministries. Called the Strategic Partnering team, it continues in its vital work building Afghan government capacity from the ground up.[400]

Finally, Canada's relatively long relationship with Governor Asadullah Khalid came to an end in summer 2008. Unable to overcome the serious allegations in the Canadian media in April relating to what were euphemistically called "human rights abuses" and revelations of documents that suggested that Khalid might have been involved in the murder of a number of UN workers, his position was no longer tenable.[401] To save face, the Afghan government likely delayed his replacement until August. It was now time for new leadership and, with it, some hope for the Afghan government to regain legitimacy.

Conclusions

The first half of 2008 had numerous concurrent changes to the Canadian approach to the war in Kandahar. The Manley Report and its aftermath, Canada's assumption of command of Regional Command (South), and the relief in place of the Laroche TF Kandahar headquarters by the Thompson headquarters all occurred at a time that key elements in the Kandahar power structure realized that they did not face the existential threat that they had in 2006.

The Laroche plan had many positive aspects to it. Specifically, district-level coordination of security entities through the Joint District Coordination Centres and early attempts to align development or at least PRT CIMIC coordination with them should be chalked up as successes. In early 2008, however, the deficiencies in the plan emerged.

First, there was a lot of tactical infrastructure, but not all of it was man-able. There were not enough police, and even fewer after the Focused District Development process. There were major issues getting police to remain in key districts. Personalities played a role as much as the multinational Tower of Babel: the senior American police mentor essentially worked at cross-purposes to the Canadians when they tried to populate the infrastructure network. What was the appropriate balance between static and mobile operations? Who was responsible for establishing the singular plan for the province?

Second, there was the unanticipated enemy backlash against the plan, especially in western Panjwayi along Route Fosters. The idea that tactical infrastructure connected by a ring road would isolate the enemy "heartland" in Nahlgam was laudable. It did not take into account the enemy presence south of this structure and the fact that the enemy were building their legitimacy on grievances that the Panjwayi District leadership refused to address and, indeed, aggravated. The cutting out of influential elements of the Panjwayi power structure on development projects aggravated further this situation, which, in turn, led to more grievances and increased insurgent violence. Finally, the difficulties in getting the ANSF to cooperate with the tactical infrastructure lay down forced the issue of "TF Zharey" and made it look like the Afghan forces were merely Canadian levies in support of dubious leaders. The TF Kandahar plan came under attack from several directions and planes, almost none of them anticipated by the planners, which made these issues even more difficult to address. Third, and most crucially, there was the incomplete consolidation of Arghandab District in the wake of the first Taliban incursion. This was in part the fall out from the systematic elimination of Alikozai influence in the Kandahar power structure by their tribal rivals, who used the confusion and uncertainty to gain the upper hand anticipating correctly that Canadian forces would bail them out if the Taliban moved in again. Again, those Canadians involved in governance failed to seriously address this "tribal cleansing." This had long-term ramifications for the rest of the Canadian Army's stay in Kandahar.

While all of this was going on, there were substantial changes in the Government of Canada's approach. For domestic political purposes, there was a new emphasis to try and refocus Canadian efforts on development. These efforts were unrealistic because they were out of phase with the realities of the security situation in Kandahar Province.

When BGen Thompson's headquarters took over in May 2008, their first inclination was to extricate themselves from the Laroche plan. They were unable to do so and had to live with the tactical infrastructure legacy throughout summer and fall 2008. All of the manning, coordinating and policing issues landed on the heads of this headquarters and they struggled to extract themselves from this maw as much as from the tactical infrastructure itself.

Similarly, Thompson and his rotation had to live with the incomplete consolidation of Arghandab District. The enemy exploited the power vacuum in Arghandab, which forced a response and distracted TF Kandahar from the Clear-Hold-Build process in Zharey and Panjwayi that it wanted to focus on. The Taliban were defeated once again in Arghandab, but then the enemy came back with new operational methods that required a dedicated occupation of Arghandab if the coalition was going to address the new threat adequately. Those forces simply did not exist in 2008 and Arghandab opened up as a new full-time enemy front in the province.

Despite all of this, this headquarters took steps to get development underway. This resulted in the creation of Stability Box JUNO and Stability Box Sperwan. The refocusing of development efforts on Kandahar City was another means to demonstrate that there was progress for the population.

Collectively Zharey and Panjwayi remained a festering wound. Both districts were crippled by the lack of police and army to man the tactical infrastructure and then generate security from those nodes. When the ANSF did not want to operate, something had to be done, so the Canadian Army did so. This resulted in Mushan River runs and supporting operations to the tactical infrastructure along Route Fosters in Panjwayi East. Holding the tactical infrastructure and supporting it distracted Canadian attention and the enemy increased operations from bases in Panjwayi East and especially along the vital Highway 1.

Attempts at any form of development in Zharey and Panjwayi were crippled by the inability of the National Solidarity Programme/District Development Assembly/Community Development Council system to work while under contact with the insurgency. In any event, local power brokers who generated grievances through favouritism, which the enemy exploited, undermined the process. At the same time, the Governor of Kandahar, Asadullah Khalid, was not seriously engaged at the provincial level and the refocus of PRT operations on other projects like the Dahla Dam contributed to the lack of development to support efforts in Zharey and Panjwayi.

There were some major successes. Operation LUMBAR, the response to attacks on Highway 1, was one of these and contributed to the operational-level success of deploying the Kajaki turbine through Kandahar Province. Operation TIMUS PREEM drove back the enemy to prevent interference with the turbine move but, more importantly, it drove back the enemy from Stability Box JUNO to buy time for it to take hold. Similarly, the efforts of the Canadian OMLT and the Afghans in Strong Point Mushan, and B Company in its fragmented positions in Panjwayi West, acted as a covering force for Stability Box SPERWAN to take hold. However, with PRT attention focused elsewhere, the ability to develop them was in question into fall 2008.

On the positive side: Spin Boldak reconstruction and development efforts did take hold, and the Canadian-created Joint District Coordination Centre was a crucial aspect of harmonizing the security forces (or at the very least providing a fig leaf for the efforts of Col. Raziq to maintain stability). Dand started to come under threat, but its governance and development efforts were well-developed by mid-2008. Arghandab's development processes worked up to a point after the second incursion but with the new enemy methods, it started to erode by fall 2008. Regional Command (South)'s interest and involvement with Maywand coupled with the American influx there looked promising.

Crucially, the Afghan National Army improved significantly by mid-2008 when closely mentored and there were a lot more Afghan forces operating in the province than ever before. The lack of a unified Canadian–Afghan operating concept for the province between TF Kandahar and 1-205 Brigade became a barrier at this time, and caused some command and control issues.

The Canadian-led Regional Command (South) also brought greater fidelity and coordination to operations across southern Afghanistan, with significant positive effects on Kandahar. These included a coordinated Afghan–Canadian response to Sarposa and Arghandab II, the facilitation of the Garmsir operations, operations in Maywand, special operations forces coordination, and enemy leadership targeting.

The Kajaki turbine operation was ultimately a failure in the long term. A Chinese contractor firm slated to pour the concrete foundations refused to work because of "security concerns" and pulled its personnel out one month after the turbine's delivery. The cement itself, 500 tonnes' worth, did not arrive because the routes remained interdicted. As of the writing of this history, the equipment remains decaying next to the dam.[402] In the short term, Operation ASP-E JANUBI produced around 400 enemy dead.[403]

The insurgency in Kandahar Province was, by mid-2008, crippled but still flailing away. The core districts they threatened were Panjwayi, Zharey and Highway 1 (Senjaray and Asheque), and they were making low-level inroads into Arghandab by late summer. The insurgents were challenged for control of non-core rural districts (Khakrez, upper Shah Wali Kot, Ghorak, Maruf and Arghistan) by special operations forces disruption operations.

By mid-2008, TF Kandahar essentially confirmed the possibility that the Kandahar power structure was almost as much a part of the problem as the insurgency, but there was paralysis on what to do about it in the Canadian camp. Attempts to remove a key element in this, Asadullah Khalid, were only partially successful. The unwillingness of the Karzai government to recognize and deal with the problem or even their complicity in creating or sustaining the problem remained an insurmountable barrier for the Canadian Army. That was the bailiwick of OGDs, so the responsibility for this problem lay elsewhere.

Events in the first half of 2008, and especially in the summer, demonstrated that there was a serious divergence between what the Canadian government wanted to accomplish on the development front in Kandahar and what was necessary to keep ISAF viable across southern Afghanistan. With only so many resources available, how should TF Kandahar and Regional Command (South) HQ deploy them? If Dahla Dam was a priority, then security in lower Shah Wali Kot and Arghandab was required. Protecting Kandahar City meant that enemy operations in Panjwayi had to be challenged and suppressed.

Ensuring that Highway 1 along Zharey remained open to supply the British and American forces fighting in Helmand meant that Zharey District security operations were also a priority. This problem would confront Canadian commanders in the last half of 2008.

For the most part, a small number of Canadians sustained the whole effort in Kandahar in 2008. Police operational mentors, army operational mentors, CIMIC and PSYOPS teams, usually worked alongside the ANSF in the isolated, hot and unforgiving police sub-stations, strong points and combat outposts of Zharey, Panjwayi, and Maywand Districts. Meanwhile, the battle group performed a valuable disruptive function with operations like NOLAI and TIMUS PREEM, buying time so that Canada and Afghanistan could reorganize their respective development and governance efforts.

ENDNOTES

1. "CBC News in Review March 2008: The Manley Report on Afghanistan."
2. Telephone interviews with David Mulroney (9 and 13 October 2014).
3. "Manley report demands effort from Government and NATO to maintain Afghan mission" www.canada.com (22 January 2008).
4. "Manley report puts equal pressure on Liberals, Conservatives," www.canada.com (22 January 2008).
5. John Manley, "Afghanistan: Meeting the Development Challenge," *Policy Options* (October 2007), pp. 6–12. There was significant commentary on this so-called "self-plagiarism" (whatever that may be) in the blogosphere but it stoked a level of suspicion that the Manley Report was predetermined before it was tabled and published. See the discussion on "On John Manley, Self-Plagiarism, and Credibility," http://phantomobserver. com (23 January 2008).
6. "Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan," [hereafter "The Manley Report"], pp. 3–4.
7. The Manley Report, p. 33.
8. Ibid., p. 35.
9. Ibid., p. 36.
10. Ibid.
11. Peter Kent, "Ottawa Misses Manley's Best Points," *Policy Options* (March 2008), pp. 50–53.
12. Jim Cox, "Afghanistan: Canada and the Intra-NATO Dialogue," PRB 08-02E House of Commons Political and Social Affairs Division (22 April 2008).
13. As depicted in Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2010).
14. The author played a discrete part in the process by which the Americans chose to deploy "The Manley Battalion" (2-2 Infantry, U.S. Army) to Kandahar.
15. Telephone interview with LGen Andrew Leslie (26 October 2014).
16. Interview with BGen Denis Thompson (Ottawa, 14 February 2012).
17. Operation SHAMSHIR briefing.
18. Regional Command (South) briefing to the author (August 2008).

19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Though General Rick Hillier led Multinational Division (Southwest) as part of the NATO Stabilization Force in Bosnia, this organization was engaged in a defined stabilization operation as opposed to a counter-insurgency war.
23. Interview with Col Spike Hazleton (Kingston, 19 April 2012).
24. Ibid.
25. Interview with Col Rene Melançon (Kingston, 3 May 2012).
26. Ibid.
27. CANSOF at this point lacked its own dedicated helicopters and was dependent on either ground delivery or someone else's helicopters. This in turn reduced its ability to react in certain circumstances in certain areas.
28. Hazleton interview; Melançon interview.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Confidential interviews. *Team America* was a marionation comedy film that had a secret American unit destroying the Eiffel Tower in a fit of exuberance while chasing terrorists. See also Nick Davies, "Afghanistan War Logs: Task Force 373-special forces hunting top Taliban," *The Guardian* (25 July 2010); Robert Winnett, "WikiLeaks Afghanistan: black operations unit carries out "kill or capture" mission," *The Telegraph* (27 July 2010). More hysterically critical websites describe TF 373 as a "death squad" with "no judicial oversight." When the SAS went after Erwin Rommel in North Africa during the Second World War, they did not require "judicial oversight" to kill him nor did the LRDG when they shot up and disrupted the Afrika Korps supply columns. TF 373 was operating from the JPEL and there was legal oversight exercised over the JPEL process.
32. Hazleton interview.
33. Melançon interview.
34. Hazleton interview.
35. Ibid.
36. Authors observations while accompanying 1st Battalion, Royal Gurkha Rifles and discussions with Lt.-Col. Johnny Bourne and his staff (February–March 2008).
37. Melançon interview.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. "Commander TFK Initial Direction to R5 Commanding Officers" (3 March 2008).
41. FRAGO to Op GARRANDAY ZMARAY. See slides "Pashmul Development Bubble" (12 January 2008).
42. JTF-A HQ WSR (22–28 February 2008).
43. JTF-A HQ, "Op RAHAWANA ZMARAY" (12 December 2007).
44. Interview with Major Geoff McCarthy (KAF, 6 August 2008).
45. Ibid. See also interview with LCol Al Mulawyshyn (KAF, 12 August 2008).

46. The CH-136 Kiowas, of which 74 equipped ten regular and reserve squadrons, were mothballed at CFS Mountainview by 1995 and sold off to the Dominican Republic and civilian users. The CH-136 mounted a Mini-TAT GAU-2A/B 7.62mm Gatling gun. See http://www.helis.com/database/model/713/.
47. Interview with Capt. Joe Corsentino, U.S. Army, and key Banshee personnel (KAF, 9 August 2008).
48. JTF-A HQ DSR (13 March 2008); J2 DSR (31 March 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (10 April 2008); J2 DSR (2 June 2008); JTF-A HQ DSR (2 July 2008); JTF-A HQ DSR (15 August 2008); Interview with Col Jamie Cade (Kandahar, 2 February 2009).
49. JPCC DSR (16 March 2008); JPCC DSR (5 May 2008); JTF-A HQ DSR (9 May 2008); JTF-A HQ DSR (13 May 2008).
50. J2 DSR (23 May 2008).
51. Battle group DSR (4 July 2008); JTF-A HQ DSR (16 July 2008); J2 DSR (25 March 2008).
52. J2 DSR (29 March 2008).
53. J2 DSR (2 March 2008); J2 DSR (4 March 2008); J2 DSR (5 March 2008); J2 DSR (10 March 2008); JTF-A HQ DSR (20 March 2008); Afghan News, "Taliban cellular antenna vandals killed, arrested," www.afgha.com (18 March 2008).
54. Ayesha Siddiqa, *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy* (London: Pluto Press, 2007); Adam Pappas, "Trade Promotion in Afghanistan: Roles for Infrastructure and Institutes," *Police Options for State-Building in Afghanistan*, School for Advances International Studies (24 April 2009).
55. "Red Ball Express Rides Again?" (World Press: 29 July 2008).
56. Briefing to the author, OCC-P (Kandahar, 3 August 2008).
57. JTF-A HQ DSR (6 June 2008); JTF-A HQ DSR (27 July 2008).
58. Interview with Major David Warnke (KAF, 8 February 2009).
59. C-IED briefings to the author.
60. Ibid.
61. See Army Counterintelligence Center Counterintelligence Analysis Report, "Wikileaks.org-An Online Reference to Foreign Intelligence Services, Insurgents, or Terror Groups?" (18 March 2008) and Tiffany Strother, "Cell Phone Use by Insurgents in Iraq" Urban Warfare Analysis Center, Wave Technologies, 14 May 2007." The historical equivalent would be, "What if the CBC announced on Radio Canada International that our Lancaster bombers were jamming Nazi air defence radar during the Second World War?"
62. The author was present when ISTAR resources revealed the enemy's frustrations in trying to target a TF Orion column with RC-IEDs in July 2006.
63. Briefings to the author (January 2008). The author was present on Operation JALEY when an exploitation team found cached Iranian-built spider devices and other IED-making materials. See also "WikiLeaks.org- An Online Reference to Foreign Intelligence Services, Insurgents, or Terror Groups?"
64. Jerome Starkey, "Prowlers Detonate Roadside Bombs," *The Scotsman* (26 March 2009).
65. Interview with Sgt David Tofts (Camp Nathan Smith, 28 January 2008).
66. C-IED briefings to the author.
67. Interview with LCol Chris Comeau (Kingston, 15 May 2012).
68. Interview with LCol Bob Ritchie (Ottawa, 24 October 2012).
69. Comeau interview.

70. JTF-A WSR (22–28 February 2008); OMLT DSR (4 March 2008).
71. Interview with Major Gilbert McCauley (KAF, 11 August 2008).
72. In previous rotations, the J6 dealt with these issues in part because of a manpower cap. With all of these changes it was no longer possible for the J6 to have the span of control over everything. Interview with Capt James Lindsay (KAF, 15 August 2008).
73. Interview with Major Jamie Vieveen (KAF, 15 August 2008).
74. TF 1-08 DSR (4 March 2008).
75. TF 1-08 DSR (17 March 2008).
76. OMLT DSR (1 March 2008).
77. The author observed the operation from the JTF-A HQ POC and then the battle group TOC.
78. OMLT DSR (1–20 March 2008); TF 1-08 DSR (20 March 2008).
79. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 March 2008).
80. JTF-A HQ DSR (19 March 2008).
81. Telephone interview with LCol Stephane Boivin (1 March 2013). See also JTF-A HQ DSRs (March–May 2008).
82. Boivin interview.
83. Ibid.
84. JTF-A DSR (16–17 April 2008).
85. J2 DSR (12 March 208); JTF-A DSR (14 April 2008).
86. JTF-A DSRs (17–25 April 2008).
87. TF 1-08 DSR (1 May 2008).
88. Boivin interview.
89. Interview with LCol Stacey Grubb (Ottawa, 4 July 2012).
90. Grubb interview.
91. Ibid.
92. TF 1-08 DSRs (7–9 March 2008).
93. Grubb interview.
94. TF 1-08 DSRs (24, 27, 29 March and 3 May 2008); Grubb interview.
95. PRT DSR (18 March 2008).
96. PRT DSR (3 March 2008).
97. PRT DSR (6 March 2008).
98. PRT CIMIC report from c/s 51 (11 March 2008).
99. OMLT DSR (24 March 2008).
100. OMLT DSR (23 March 2008).
101. J2 DSR (5 March 2008).

102. J2 DSR (10 March 2008).
103. J2 DSR (25 March 2008).
104. OMLT DSR (13 March 2008).
105. JTF-A HQ SIGACT (13 March 2008).
106. JTF-A HQ DSR (16 March 2008).
107. OMLT DSRs (16–19 March 2008).
108. JTF-A HQ SIGACTS (14, 16 and 23 March 2008).
109. OMLT DSR (24 March 2008).
110. TF 1-08 DSR (31 March 2008).
111. JTF-A HQ SIGACT (30 March 2008).
112. Interview with MWO Alison Clark (Kingston, 4 May 2012).
113. Interview with Major Mike Lane (Ottawa, 8 March 2012).
114. Ibid. See also Interview with Capt Reg McMichael (Edmonton, 12 July 2012).
115. TF 1-08 DSRs (8–9, 14–15 March 2008).
116. TF 1-08 DSR (24 March 2008); McMichael interview.
117. OMLT DSRs (3, 6–7 March 2008).
118. TF 1-08 DSRs (26–29 March 2008); J2 DSR (29 March 2008).
119. TF 1-08 DSRs (30 March–2 April 2008).
120. TF 1-08 DSRs (2–5 April 2008); TF 1-08 DSR (15 April 2008).
121. PRT DSR, CIMIC callsign 51 report (3 March 2008).
122. PRT DSR (17 March 2008).
123. PRT DSR (5 March 2008).
124. PRT DSR (17 March 2008).
125. Discussions with Capt Larocque (Panjwayi District, 1 February 2008).
126. PRT DSR, CIMIC call sign 52 report Panjwayi (18 March 2008).
127. Ibid.
128. PRT DSR, CIMIC callsign 52 report Panjwayi (8 March 2008).
129. PRT DSR (2 April 2008).
130. Ibid.
131. PRT KLE report (4 April 2008).
132. PRT DSR, CIMIC Detailed Follow Up call sign 52 Panjwayi (14 April 2008).
133. PRT DSR (15 April 2008).
134. PRT DSR, callsign 52 report Panjwayi (22 April 2008).
135. PRT DSR, callsign 52 report Panjwayi (23 April 2008).

136. PRT DSR callsign 52 report Panjwayi (24 April 2008).

137. OMLT DSR (12 March 2008).

138. Interview with LCol Dana Woodworth (Camp Nathan Smith, 27 August 2008).

139. PRT DSR (16 March 2008).

140. Woodworth interview. Interview with Major Eric Perey (Camp Nathan Smith, 28 August 2008).

141. PRT DSR (3 March 2008).

142. PRT DSR (10 March 2008).

143. PRT DSR (9 April 2008).

144. PRT DSR (16 April 2008).

145. PRT DSR (18 March 2008).

146. PRT DSR (4 March 2008).

147. JTF-A HQ WSRs (28 March–3 April 2008).

148. KLE with Ahmad Wali Karzai (11 September 2007).

149. JTF-A HQ WSRs (22–28 February 2008).

150. Ibid.

151. "Post Operation Report Headquarters Regional Command South-Rotation 4" (24 October 2008).

152. This was the phrase BGen David Fraser used when the author asked him in July 2006 as to why Governor Asadullah Khalid could not be removed. It was repeated to the author on several occasions by subsequent senior Canadian personnel during successive rotations.

153. CTV News "Karzai Should Replace Kandahar Governor" (14 April 2008).

154. Except those who sought to blame the Canadian Forces for not recommending the removal of Khalid in the past and thus deflect attention away for their own inability to handle the governance portfolio they sought with so much vigour. See Murray Brewster, "Canada defended torturer," *Toronto Star* (14 December 2009).

155. PRT DSR, CIMIC det report to PRT (18 April 2008).

156. As discussed in Nicholas Grammer's "The Afghanistan Task Force and Prime Ministerial Leadership."

157. To wit, Golberg "joined the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in 1996 and has worked on a range of global peace and security issues over the past decade. Among other duties, she has managed Canadian responses to significant natural disasters, political violence and armed conflict. In 2005, she became director of the Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Response Division, then senior director and deputy head of the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force. In 2007, Ms. Golberg became executive director of the Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan with the Privy Council Office."

158. As for the RoCK's effectiveness, the author was approached by members of the Kandahari power structure to ask if Canada was deliberately insulting them or if this was some form of joke that they did not understand. Provincial Council members, in discussion with the author through his interpreter, referred to the RoCK in Pashtun as "The Little Girl" with all of the implications that carries with it. Note that under Pashtun tribal hospitality codes, it is inappropriate to insult guests, so these conversations were obviously extraordinary, given the circumstances. During discussions with senior JTF-A HQ personnel, they explained to the author that the Afghan provincial-level leadership would frequently defer to BGen Denis Thompson and not to Elissa Golberg during shuras. The choice

of a young female foreign affairs officer to represent Canada in the incredibly conservative Islamic, not to mention homosocial, Pashtun heartland of southern Afghanistan was a highly questionable decision given the gravity of the situation. The author was, unfortunately, unable to gain the permission of the Canadian government to interview Ambassador Golberg for her perspective on the matter.

159. Which had other, more malign aspects to it as Ruth Hubbard and Gilles Paquet note in their book, *Probing the Bureaucratic Mind: About Canadian Federal Executives* (Ottawa: Commoners Publishing, 2014). "In our view the state of mind of senior executives has come to be tainted by a multitude of bad habits: creeping cognitive dissonance and political correctness, erosion of critical thinking. These bad habits of the mind have unwittingly led to reprehensible behaviour; rewarding failure; punishing success; failure to confront, disloyalty."
160. Telephone interviews with David Mulroney (9 and 13 October 2014).
161. Ibid.
162. Ibid.
163. Canada Privy Council Office, "Canada's Engagement in Afghanistan June 2008: Setting a Course to 2011," Report to Parliament (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2008), p. 6.
164. Ibid.
165. Discussion with LCol Tim Young (KAF, 15 August 2008); Discussions with Major Jeff Davis and LCol Fraser Auld (KAF, 8 August 2008).
166. Memorandum JTF-A COMD to D.L. "Of Interest to the Commander" (16 May 2008).
167. Discussion with LCol Tim Young (KAF, 15 August 2008); Discussions with LCdr Elizabeth Woodcliffe and Major Mario Beauchesne (KAF, 15 August 2008).
168. BGen Denis Thompson daily diary (16 and 19 May 2008).
169. Thompson papers, "Current Situation/Major Deduction Notes" (May 2008). See also interview with BGen Denis Thompson (Ottawa, 14 February 2012).
170. Ibid.
171. Memorandum JTF-A COMD to D.L. "Of Interest to the Commander" (16 May 2008).
172. Thompson papers, "Operational Philosophy V.1."
173. Thompson interview.
174. BGen Denis Thompson daily diary (16, 19, 21, 23 and 31 May and 29 June 2008).
175. OMLT DSR (3 March 2008).
176. JTF-A HQ SIGACTS (7 and 12 April 2008). See Interview with Capt Tyler Wentzell (Kingston, 26 March 2011).
177. Discussions with the PSYOPS team (KAF, 15 August 2008).
178. Wentzell interview.
179. Ibid.
180. Ibid, Wentzell patrol report.
181. Lolita C. Baldor, "24th MEU Singled Out for Afghan Duty" (The Associated Press, 14 January 2008); 24 MEU PAO, "Operation AZADA WOSA: Recounting the 24th MEU's Progress in Garmsir."
182. Correspondence with the author.

183. 24 MEU briefing to the author (KAF, 15 August 2008).
184. Hazleton interview.
185. Or was it the other way around? One could never be sure.
186. Briefing to the author on contractor issues, JTF-A HQ (KAF, 15 August 2008).
187. See "Private Security Contracting and the Counter-insurgency Mission in Afghanistan: United States House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Testimony by Carl Forsberg, Institute for the Study of War, 22 June 2010." See also Carl Forsberg and Kimberly Kagan, "Consolidating Private Security Companies in Southern Afghanistan" study.
188. Email Boivin to Maloney (11 March 2013).
189. Boivin interview.
190. Ibid.
191. Thompson Papers, "Chief J2 Occasional Paper 3-The importance of Kandahar City" (May 2008),
192. Ibid.
193. Ibid.
194. Thompson marginalia on the "Importance of Kandahar City" occasional paper.
195. Interview with Major Chris Adams (FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, 17 and 18 August 2008).
196. Ibid.
197. PRT DSR (31 May 2008).
198. PRT DSR (10 June 2008).
199. PRT DSR (3 June 2008).
200. That is, The Rocket Man.
201. TF 1-08 DSR (1–3 May 2008); TF 1-08 FRAGO Operation TOORAH AZADI II.
202. OMLT DSRs (1–24 May 2008).
203. TF 1-08 DSR (24 May 2008); TF 1-08 Post Op Report, TOORAH AZADI REDUX.
204. OMLT DSR (12 May 2008).
205. OMLT DSRs (1–13 June 2008).
206. OMLT DSR (16 June 2008).
207. PRT DSR (30 June 2008).
208. TF 1-08 DSR (9 June 2008).
209. Lane interview.
210. McMichael interview.
211. Ibid.
212. Lane interview.
213. TF 1-08 DSR. OMLT DSR (3 June 2008).
214. OMLT DSR (1 May 2008).

215. OMLT DSR (7 May 2008).
216. OMLT DSR (9 May 2008).
217. OMLT DSRs (10 and 14 May 2008).
218. Ritchie interview.
219. OMLT DSR (17 May 2008).
220. OMLT DSRs (20 and 22 May 2008). Mulawyshyn interview.
221. Mulawyshyn interview.
222. OMLT DSR (28 May 2008).
223. JTF-A HQ DSR (13 May 2008).
224. TFK Weekly ASSESSREP (30 May 2008).
225. JTF-A HQ SIGACT (25 May 2008).
226. 226. TF 1-08 DSR (28–30 May 2008); JTF-A HQ SIGACT (28 May 2008).
227. Ibid.
228. ASIC assessment of Op RAWA TANDER (31 May 2008).
229. J2 DSR (1 June 2008).
230. TFK/2 PPCLI BG Operation LEWE [Wolf] CONOP LEVEL 2 Briefing (14–22 July 2008).
231. JTF-A DSR (5 June 2008).
232. "2 PPCLI BG Use of UAV in the Hunter-Killer Role" (July 2008).
233. Interview with Major Jay Adair (Ottawa, 9 March 2012).
234. The term "Deep Battle" was misleading because it had operational-level connotations from NATO Cold War concepts and terminology like FOFA and the Reconnaissance-Strike Complex.
235. Adair interview.
236. The author spent many sleepless nights in the battle group TOC with Major Louis Hamel watching the "kill TV" process in August 2008.
237. Adair interview. A cursory count and examination of the JTF-A HQ SIGACTS approximates these numbers and there is video footage of almost all of the strikes, some of it captured by TUAV, the rest by MQ-1 or MQ-9.
238. The author was a member of the KAFCC and was present in 2008 and 2009 for some of these meetings.
239. Thompson Papers, Daily Diary (22 and 26 May, and 4 June 2008).
240. Email LCol Fraser Auld to Maloney (5 November 2009).
241. TF 1-08 DSR (13–14 June 2008); OMLT DSR (15 June 2008); authors notes on Op NOLAI (KAF, 6 August 2008).
242. Interview with Capt Alex Duncan (Kingston, 26 March 2011).
243. Duncan interview.
244. Sean M. Maloney, "Panjwayi Alamo: The Defence of Strongpoint Mushan," *Canadian Military History*, Vol. 18 No. 3, pp. 47–63.
245. Operation NOLAI Chronology.

246. Duncan interview.
247. Maloney, "Panjwayi Alamo."
248. Operation NOLAI Chronology.
249. Ibid.
250. Ibid.
251. Ibid.
252. JTF-A HQ DSR (8 June 2008).
253. JPCC DSRs (7 and 8 March 2008).
254. Author's discussions with senior Afghan Ministry of the Interior officer (August 2008).
255. Woodworth interview.
256. JPCC DSR (14 June 2008).
257. JTF-A HQ SIGACT (13 June 2008); JPCC reporting to JTF-A HQ (15 June 2008).
258. TFK ASSESSREP (20 June 2008).
259. JTF-A HQ Monthly Assessment Report (June 2008).
260. Discussions with Canadian and Afghan intelligence personnel (Kandahar, August 2008) Some also believe that Lashkar-e Taiba provided the team.
261. Ibid.
262. JPCC DSR (29 June 2008).
263. Discussions with Correctional Services Canada personnel (Kingston, September 2008). The author visited Sarposa Prison in 2007 and 2008 and spoke with Afghan and Canadian personnel at the site.
264. Ibid.
265. PRT DSR (18 June 2008).
266. JPCC DSR (7–8 June 2008); JTF-A DSR (9–11 June 2008).
267. JTF-A HQ SIGACT (13 June 2008).
268. J2 DSR (14 June 2008). JPCC DSR (15 June 2008).
269. "Operation DAOR BUKHOU Post Operation Report" (1 July 2008). Hazleton interview; Melançon interview.
270. Frago 01 Operation DAOR BUKHOU; Melançon and Hazleton interviews.
271. Interview with LCol Dan Drew (KAF, 15 August 2008).
272. Interview with Major Steve Joudrey (KAF, 10 August 2008).
273. PRT DSR (18 June 2008).
274. Frago 01 Operation DAOR BUKHOU; JPCC DSR (17 June 2008).
275. Interview with MGen Al Howard (Kingston, 20 July 2012).
276. Joudrey and Drew interviews.
277. PRT DSR (19 June 2008).

278. Operation DAOR BUKHOU Chronology.
279. Ibid; Joudrey and Drew interviews.
280. JTF-A HQ DSR (19 June 2008).
281. JTF-A HQ DSR (20 June 2008).
282. Operation DAOR BUKHOU Chronology; Joudrey and Drew interviews.
283. Drew interview.
284. JTF-A Commander's Morning Update (3 July 2008).
285. PRT DSR (20 June 2008).
286. JTF-A HQ DSR (28 June 2008).
287. JTF-A HQ DSR (30 June 2008).
288. Interview with MGen Al Howard (Kingston, 20 July 2012).
289. Howard interview.
290. Discussion with Col Jay Milne (KAF, 30 January 2009).
291. Howard interview.
292. Ibid.
293. Letter to Comd Regional Command (South) from JTF-A HQ "Concerns-Comd Joint Task Force Kandahar-Cycle 2 of the Focused District Development" (n/d).
294. JPCC DSR (1 May 2008).
295. JPCC DSR (21 May 2008).
296. OCC-P DSR (19 July and 1 August 2008).
297. Author's discussions with senior JTF-A HQ and ARSIC personnel, August 2008.
298. Interview with LCol Dwayne Hobbs (Kandahar, 3 August 2008); interview with LCol Doug Poitras (KAF, 7 August 2008). Discussions with LCol Dana Woodworth (Camp Nathan Smith, 27 August 2008); discussions with Col Jamie Cade (KAF, 4 August 2008); discussions with LCol Marc Gendron (3 August 2008).
299. McMichael interview.
300. Ibid.
301. Grahame Smith, "Fired Kandahar police chief says Canadian let him down," *Globe and Mail* (3 July 2008). See http://afghanistan-the-true-story.blogspot.ca/2008/07/fired-kandahar-police-chief-says.html.
302. Thompson interview.
303. PRT DSR (5 May 2008).
304. Discussions with Tactical PSYOPS Team (KAF, 15 August 2008).
305. Interview with Major Jim Allen (Camp Nathan Smith, 28 August 2008). Interview with Major Eric Perey (Camp Nathan Smith, 28 August 2008).
306. Ibid.

307. "Warlord, Inc: Extortion and Corruption Along the U.S. Supply Chain in Afghanistan," Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, U.S. House of Representatives (June 2010), p. 38.
308. PRT DSR (8 May 2008).
309. PRT DSR (17 June 2008).
310. PRT DSR (4 August 2008).
311. PRT DSR (6 August 2008).
312. PRT DSR (16 August 2008).
313. PRT DSR (30 June 2008).
314. PRT DSR (1 August 2008). The author of this section in the DSR commented that the mayor was merely jealous of the large number of UN projects and downplayed his concerns. That view reflects the pro-UN bias of some Canadian personnel. Who was supposed to run Kandahar City, the UN or the mayor?
315. JTFA HQ DSR (24 and 28 August 2008).
316. JTF-A DSR (6 June 2008); JPCC DSR (6 June 2008).
317. JTF-A HQ DSR (8–14 June 2008).
318. JTF-A DSR (26 July 2008).
319. Vieveen interview.
320. PRT DSR (3 June 2008).
321. PRT DSR (22 July 2008).
322. Clark interview.
323. JTF-A DSRs (3–29 July0208).
324. Thompson interview.
325. Author's Afghan sources.
326. JTF-A HQ DSRs (6–7 July 2008).
327. Hobbs interview.
328. Ibid.
329. JTF-A HQ DSR (6 July 2008).
330. Cade interview.
331. Author's discussions with LCol Dana Woodworth (Camp Nathan Smith, 27 August 2008).
332. The best approximation of events at this time barring the availability of new information was that Habibullah Jan and Ahmad Wali Karzai made a deal over a quiet dinner to delineate their extracurricular activities in order to set Habibullah Jan at ease. But then a power broker aligned with Ahmad Wali Karzai concurrently arranged the assassination while Habibullah Jan's guard was down. Another "player" ensured that there would be no police protection or response. Asadullah Khalid's and Ahmad Wali Karzai's animosity towards Habibullah Jan was well known to Canadian analysts as were their attempts to shape the Canadian view of Habibullah Jan. There remains no hard connection between the Habibullah Jan killer and elements in the Kandahari political structure.

333. OCC-P DSR (4 July 2008).

334. PRT DSR (30 June 2008).

335. Ibid.

336. JTF-A DSR (28 July 2008).

337. JTF-A HQ, "Operation LUMBAR" (22 July 2008).

338. Operation LUMBAR Chronology.

339. Ibid.

340. Ibid. Briefing to the author (KAF, 8 August 2008).

341. JTF-A HQ Briefing, "Operation SOTAK" (2 July 2008); JTF-A HQ DSR (2 July 2008); JTF-A HQ DSR (8 July 2008).

342. TF 1-08 DSR (23 July 2008).

343. PRT DSR (5 July 2008).

344. TF 1-08 DSRs (26 July and 2, 4 and 11 August 2008).

345. PRT DSR (27 July 2008).

346. 346. TF 1-08 DSRs (26–30 July 2008).

347. Lane interview.

348. JTF-A HQ DSRs (4–29 July 2008).

349. McMichael interview.

350. The author was being briefed by the TUAV unit at its site when COP Haji came under attack and he observed the response in real time.

351. This section is derived from CIMIC reports to the PRT for the entire month of August 2008 in addition to the author's research in Panjwayi District that summer.

352. This section is based on "Panjwayi Alamo: The Defence of Strongpoint Mushan," *Canadian Military History* (Summer 2009), pp. 47-63. This article was based on interviews with the OMLT personnel stationed at SP Mushan during this period and were conducted in the field the summer of 2008.

353. B Squadron Post Operation Report, Operation ROOM SERVICE (2, 5–7 July 2008).

354. Ibid.

355. B Squadron Operations Order, "Operation LEWE" (15 July 2008); TF 1-08 DSR (18 July 2008).

356. Also known as Operation MUTAFIQ TANDAR 3.

357. B Squadron Post Operation Report, Operation MUTAFIQ TANDAR 3 (26–30 July 2008).

358. Ibid.

359. 2-2 Infantry briefings to the author, FOB RAMROD, Maywand District, 13 March 2009. Note that the author was asked by TF Kandahar to assist 2-2 Infantry with familiarization of Maywand District and past operations in the area as their own intelligence picture was minimal on arrival.

360. Ibid.

361. JTF-A HQ DSR (11–22 July 2008).

362. ASIC briefing to the author (15 August 2008).

363. Note that Canadian opposition parties, the media and human rights groups did not demand investigations, inquires, or Red Crescent intervention into the Taliban secret prisons and torture chambers.

364. J2 DSR (2 August 2008).

365. JTF-A DSR (15–20 August 2008); Interview with Major Chris Comeau (Kingston, 16 May 2012).

366. JTF-A DSR (20–31 August 2008).

367. The operation code name was generated by an Australian planner who used an Australian term for a non-existent animal specifically so that it would be difficult for JOC commander LCol René Melançon to pronounce. This related to an incident where LCol Melançon was publicly berated in a humiliating fashion by Maj.-Gen. Jacko Page and Melançon retaliated by using the most difficult French Canadian phrase he could muster as an operations code name so that Page would trip over it. See Melançon interview. See also the email from Col Spike Hazleton to the author (12 March 13).

368. Hazleton and Melançon interviews.

369. Ibid.

370. "Post Operation Report Headquarters Regional Command South-Rotation 4" (24 October 2008).

371. The author was observing in the TOC while C Company was under contact. TF 1-08 DSRs (6–7 August 2008).

372. The author was observing in the TOC while C Company was under contact.

373. TF 1-08 DSR (11 August 2008).

374. This section is based on Sean M. Maloney, "The Mechs: Operation TIMUS PREEM," *Canadian Military History* (Summer 2010), pp. 57-72.

375. Note. The author accompanied LCol David Corbould and his TAC HQ on this operation.

376. Interview with LCol Casey Horlock (KAF, 10 August 2008).

377. Ibid.

378. Author's observation.

379. Horlock interview.

380. Ibid.

381. Horlock interview.

382. BATTY stands for "Big Ass Tan Truck, Yo!" CSS Briefing to the author (Ma'Sum Ghar, 19 August 2008).

383. CSS Briefing to the author (Ma'Sum Ghar, 19 August 2008); Briefing to the author by MCpl Stan Goodyear and Trooper James Jacobs (Ma'Sum Ghar, 4 March 2008).

384. Briefing to the author by MCpl Stan Goodyear and Trooper James Jacobs (Ma'Sum Ghar, 4 March 2008).

385. Though the Air Force was steadily working on getting CH-47 Chinooks to replace the ones sold to the Dutch at the end of the Cold War now that they had the green light after the Manley Report.

386. "SkyLink USA Corporate Presentation and Capabilities Briefing" (n/d).

387. JTF-A HQ SIGACT (1 June 2008).

388. Discussions with LCol Ed Haskins (KAF, 2 February 2009).

389. Telephone interview with Col Serge Labbé (10 October 2012).

390. Labbé interview.

391. Ibid.

392. Correspondence between Major Sean Wyatt and the author.

393. Telephone interviews with David Mulroney (9 and 13 October 2014).

394. Labbé interview. The author attempted to contact Ambassador Lalani for comment but requests for an interview were not returned.

395. Labbé interview. Lalani's professional background consisted of "various assignments at Headquarters and abroad, including a brief assignment in Copenhagen and work with the Senior Coordinator for the Middle East peace process, European Union issues, and Commonwealth and United Nations affairs. In 1994, he was assigned to the Embassy of Canada to Turkey. Mr. Lalani also served abroad at the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations in New York during Canada's term on the Security Council and as counsellor in Washington, D.C. In 2006, he was appointed ambassador of Canada to Jordan, with accreditation to Iraq." In other words, he had no substantial ground-level experience with conflict zones and apparently no substantial interdepartmental experience with the CF or DND. See also Global Affairs Canada website, News: Diplomatic Appointment (28 August 2012).

396. Fonberg was moved into DND from DFAIT in 2007 where he had been deputy minister for international trade. Like his former DFAIT confreres, Fonberg, also lacked any experience with international conflict zones let alone military operations.

397. Labbé interview.

398. Nicholas Grammer, "The Afghanistan Task Force and Prime Ministerial Leadership." See www.cpsa-acsp.ca.

399. See "The Canadian Government Support Office," Canada's Engagement in Afghanistan website.

400. Labbé interview.

401. CBC news, "Afghan Governor's Rights Abuses known in 2007," (12 April 2010). See also Graeme Smith, "House of Pain: Canada's Connection with Kandahar's Ruthless Palace Guard," *Globe and Mail* (10 April 2010) and updated edition of 23 August 2010, which retracted allegations of knowledge of these events by LGen Gauthier and BGen Fraser.

402. Mark Urban, "What went wrong with Afghanistan Kajaki power project?" BBC (27 June 2011); Glenn Zorpette, "Re-engineering Afghanistan," *IEEE SPECTRUM* (October 2011).

403. Hazleton interview.

CHAPTER FOUR

EQUILIBRIUM:

SEPTEMBER 2008–FEBRUARY 2009

Introduction

The turbulence generated by the rapidly changing Canadian strategic landscape, coupled with the psychological body blows of Sarposa, Arghandab II, and an accelerating assassination campaign directed at "soft" Afghanistan targets in Kandahar City, ushered TF Kandahar and its units into the second half of 2008. The replacement of Governor Asadullah Khalid brought with it further provincial-level uncertainty. But the damage to the enemy forces in southern Afghanistan temporarily brought calmer waters through a combination of leadership targeting, the tracking down and elimination of escaped Sarposa insurgents, the drawing in and killing of several hundred insurgents who attacked the Kajaki turbine replacement as it inched toward the dam, and the tightening chokehold on the enemy's ability to resupply and reinforce their forces in Zharey and Panjwayi Districts as coalition activities in Maywand and Helmand increased.

As the campaign entered the fall of 2008, an equilibrium of sorts developed between the insurgency and the coalition forces in Kandahar Province. This state of affairs brought with it the possibilities of increased development, reconstruction and capacity-building on the ANSF front in areas that the insurgents exhibited less control. As a result, there was increased Canadian emphasis in efforts in Kandahar City. There was pressure from Ottawa to get moving on the Dahla Dam project. Some non-governmental aid organizations pressed to increase their activities in the province. The problem was that the enemy once again altered course and proved to be agile in the face of an overwhelming force when that force was directed in one area.

At the same time, the provincial power structure accrued more and more access to coalition resources but was unable to generate the synergy necessary to have a significant effect on the ground in the adjacent and outlying districts. Legitimacy increasingly became a public issue as the Afghan government moved toward national elections in 2009. There was now increased scope for enemy operations to interfere with that process and perhaps reverse their crucial errors of 2004 and 2005. The Canadian Army's campaign in southern Afghanistan was not fought in a political vacuum and, throughout the last months of 2008, it had to respond to both Canadian and Afghan political imperatives.

The Canadian Strategic Dimension

The minority government in Canada decided, by the end of August 2008, to hold an election, and Parliament was dissolved on 7 September. Once again, the enemy were watching carefully and attempted to gain strategic leverage. Taliban media operations leader Qari Mohammad Yousef used the CBC news network to disseminate their message:

> Our message to the Canadian leaders, the Canadian people, the Canadian government, and all Canadians is that they should not send their sons to Afghanistan, where they will die for the benefit of the Americans. Afghanistan will be a graveyard for them.[1]

Yousef, when interviewed by the Canadian Press, remarked: "Yes, I know that the election is being held in Canada. That is why our attacks on Canadians are increased…. My suggestion for the next prime minister is to withdraw Canadians from Afghanistan."[2] Permitting the enemy's leadership access to the Canadian population through Canadian media without a robust response from the Canadian government was a questionable path to take, ceded psychological ground to the enemy, and would have been unheard of during the Second World War. This was the functional equivalent of interviewing Joseph Goebbels.

As it turned out, more pressing domestic matters in Canada overrode Afghanistan during the course of this election campaign and this time around, none of the opposition parties chose to substantially focus on the war as an election issue. Moreover, to its credit, the government did not instruct deployed forces to curtail operations during the run-up to the election as its predecessors had in 2004.

The attempts to establish a semblance of a government strategy remained in the hands of David Mulroney. In the post-Manley Report period, which involved the creation of the Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan and the commitment to report on Canadian progress, Mulroney and his team formulated "an extensive set of benchmarks by which Canadians and Parliament can assess what progress is or is not being made in the mission between now and 2011."[3] And, "While Canada remains an influential player and has a growing embassy in Kabul, we are now concentrating both our civilian and military contributions to Afghanistan in Kandahar." The new strategic objective, as distinct from the ones established in November 2001, was "to make measurable progress by 2011 toward building a safer and better governed Kandahar supported by a national government more able to advance Afghanistan's own security and development."[4]

These objectives became known as the "Six Priorities" and they were to

1. enable the ANSF in Kandahar to sustain a more secure environment and promote law and order;

2. strengthen Afghan institutional capacity to deliver core services and promote economic growth, enhancing the confidence of Kandaharis in the government;

3. provide humanitarian assistance for extremely vulnerable people, including refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons;

4. enhance border security with facilitation of bilateral dialogue between Afghan and Pakistani authorities;

5. help advance Afghanistan's capacity for democratic governance by contributing to effective, accountable public institutions and electoral processes; and

6. facilitate Afghan-led efforts toward political reconciliation.

At some point in the process, a decision was made to graft what were called "signature projects" to this strategy. The purpose of the signature projects was initially unclear, but they consisted of the Dahla Dam project the construction of 50 schools, and a polio eradication initiative in the province.

As seen in Volume I, the first of these was an Afghan-proposed, Afghan-stimulated project, while the polio eradication initiative was already underway through a myriad of agencies long before the Canadian decision to adopt it as "Canadian." The signature projects were embedded into the "benchmarks" that were supposed to be reported on by the Canadian government every quarter.

The decision to adopt this as Canadian strategy was breathtakingly narrow, given the extant circumstances in southern Afghanistan over the past several years. It was almost as if the insurgency did not exist to the strategy's formulators. There was some language about a "fierce insurgency" but the Canadian goals and signature projects suggested that "providing core services" would increase government legitimacy and would therefore prevail when shielded by more effective Afghan security forces. This approach completely ignored how legitimacy operated in Kandahari political culture. There was no understanding of the role of religion in Kandahari social and political life, let alone was there any understanding as to the relationship between religion, schools and education.

Furthermore, there was no recognition that Al Qaeda played any role in Canada's involvement in Afghanistan in the first place, nor was there any recognition that Al Qaeda was displaced back in 2001–2002 and essentially rendered comparatively impotent in part because Afghanistan was now under new management. The reality was that Kandahar was a series of operational-level problems that were aggravated by a resurgent Al Qaeda ally

or affiliates supported by entities in Pakistan. The problems with the Kandahari power structure, on the other hand, were connected to both Kabul and to criminal entities that crossed international boundaries. Those manufacturing the new strategy, now, artificially disconnected these strategic-level issues from what Canada wanted to achieve in Kandahar. Furthermore, the means of measuring Canadian effectiveness in Kandahar played to a domestic Canadian audience and were connected to some, and not all, of the operational-level problems in the province.

Operation TOLO: Regional Command (South)'s New Operational Framework

The Regional Command (South) headquarters led by Lessard completely reassessed the situation in September in light of the summer's events. The new framework plan, Operation TOLO, was less convoluted than previous plans when it came to identifying the threat. Yes, the Al Qaeda, Taliban, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and HiG enemies all remained the same. However, Iran was now identified as a weapons supplier. Pakistan was identified as a Taliban sanctuary, and the Quetta Shura was explicitly identified as providing strategic direction to the insurgency in Afghanistan. Even more forcibly, TOLO recognized that rogue elements of the Pakistani ISI, coupled with a recruiting effort in Pakistani Pashtun areas, Afghan refugee camps and madrassas provided large numbers of fighters that were pouring into Kandahar and Helmand. Indeed, Regional Command (South) confirmed that Helmand and Kandahar Provinces were the enemy's main efforts in Afghanistan.[5]

Operation TOLO clearly descended from the ADZ strategy of 2007 (see Figure 4-1). Regional Command (South) identified several priority focus areas in the region and these focus areas were to be subjected to the Shape-Clear-Hold-Build process. The difference this time was that all four lines of operation (security, governance, security force capacity-building, and reconstruction and development) were to be better coordinated and synchronized, and that ISAF forces were to partner with the Afghan police and army, not just mentor them. The objective of Operation TOLO was to reduce enemy influence for the next six months until the American influx could come in, whatever that might look like.

The focus areas that affected the Canadians in Kandahar were Zharey, Panjwayi, Arghandab, and Maywand. These districts were to be cleared. The existing Hold was to be "deepened" in Spin Boldak and Kandahar City. Maywand District particularly was to be a pilot project for Shape-Clear-Hold-Build. Keeping Highway 1 open remained a priority. Regional Command (South) planners clearly stated that ISAF lacked resources to do anything else outside this schema, and that higher headquarters (and for that matter critics of the effort in Afghanistan) should manage their expectations.

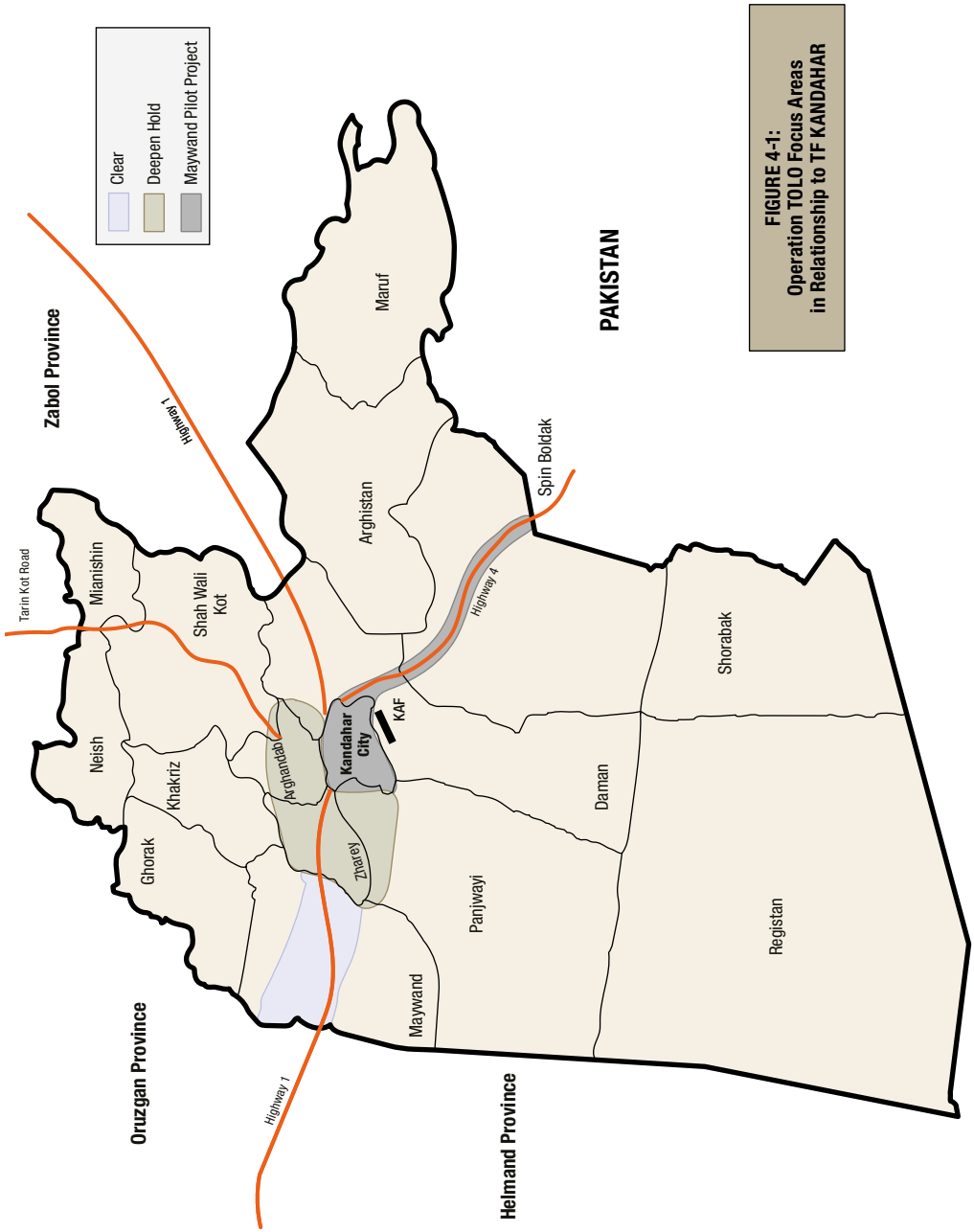


Figure 4-1: Operation TOLO Focus Areas in Relationship to TF Kandahar

Unlike previous plans, Operation TOLO recognized that there were severe governance problems in the southern region, especially at the provincial level. Canadians in Regional Command (South) noted that Ahmad Wali Karzai in Kandahar, Sher Mohammad Akhundzada in Helmand, and Jan Mohammad Khan in Oruzgan were all endorsed by President Karzai and functioned as the Popalzai power structure in the south. It was increasingly difficult for Regional Command (South) to differentiate between inter-tribal, familial, criminal and insurgent activities. Operation TOLO was a sober, realistic assessment and confirmed that the game was evolving yet again. It also recognized that the forces in place were holding the line, awaiting reinforcement and there were limits as to what could be accomplished until that took place.

Task Force Afghanistan: The Thompson View

TF Afghanistan now had to reconcile the Canadian strategic dimension and Operation TOLO with its Interim Provincial Action Plan, now called the Kandahar Action Plan. Frustrated with the process, BGen Denis Thompson later said that "David Mulroney and 'his' six priority programmes" were "irrelevant" to the effort in Kandahar. "I watched them at work and I did not care. Why did we not establish 'winning the war' as a priority?" Thompson told Mulroney that there were 30 things that needed to be done in Kandahar. Canada was going to do six, but those six were not relevant to Afghans. Who was going to handle the other 24? Canada did not prioritize electricity, for example, so when PRT commander LCol Dana Woodworth had meetings and asked who was going to handle this, the Canadian civilian representatives had their hands tied by the "Six Priorities." The Americans leapt on board with the electricity issue: "They understand influence, we do not."[6]

Thompson chose to focus TF Kandahar's efforts on the objects of his operational philosophy instead and not get too caught up with what he viewed as another "distraction." Thompson, by this time, was moving toward the view (encouraged by the Canadians in Regional Command (South)) that Kandahar City was not necessarily under control. That needed to be addressed. The issue here for the Thompson headquarters, and for BGen Jon Vance, who was working up plans with his staff to replace Thompson in early 2009, was that fighting inside Kandahar City with conventional coalition troops was simply not an option. The American experience with Fallujah in Iraq back in 2004 loomed in the background.[7] Fallujah, a city of 250 000 inhabitants and about less than half the geographic size of Kandahar City, became a resistance no-go zone and then a terrorist sanctuary. The first entry into Fallujah by four American battalions was repulsed in April 2004. In December 2004, it took two brigades to clear and then hold the city. There was massive

damage and substantial loss of civilian life.[8] ISAF, let alone Canada, lacked the forces and the will to conduct any similar operations. There had to be other alternatives but those tended to be subsumed under the weight of the plethora of other issues at hand.

Second, Thompson spent more time looking at the dimensions of the insurgency and what TF Kandahar could do about that. He believed that the insurgency had four pressure points:

1. sanctuary: recruits, training and money;

2. infiltration routes: safe passage to and from operating areas;

3. resupply nodes: leadership, arms, ammo, medical; and

4. support of the population: intelligence and food.

The Operational Philosophy described as the Define-Shape-Clear-Hold-Build-Enable schema, remained viable to address some of these.[9] However, there had to be more focus at the sub-district level, not merely at the district level, in order to establish an enduring presence.

For Thompson and his staff, the means of "deepening the hold" and "protecting the hold" were crucial. This involved[10]

1. joint day and night patrols;

2. quick reaction to both incidents and intelligence threat warnings and indications;

3. support to initial BUILD/ENABLE efforts;

4. securing lines of communication;

5. intelligence-cued direct actions against insurgent nodes;

6. active targeting of insurgent leadership;

7. sustained disrupt operations to DEFINE and SHAPE; and

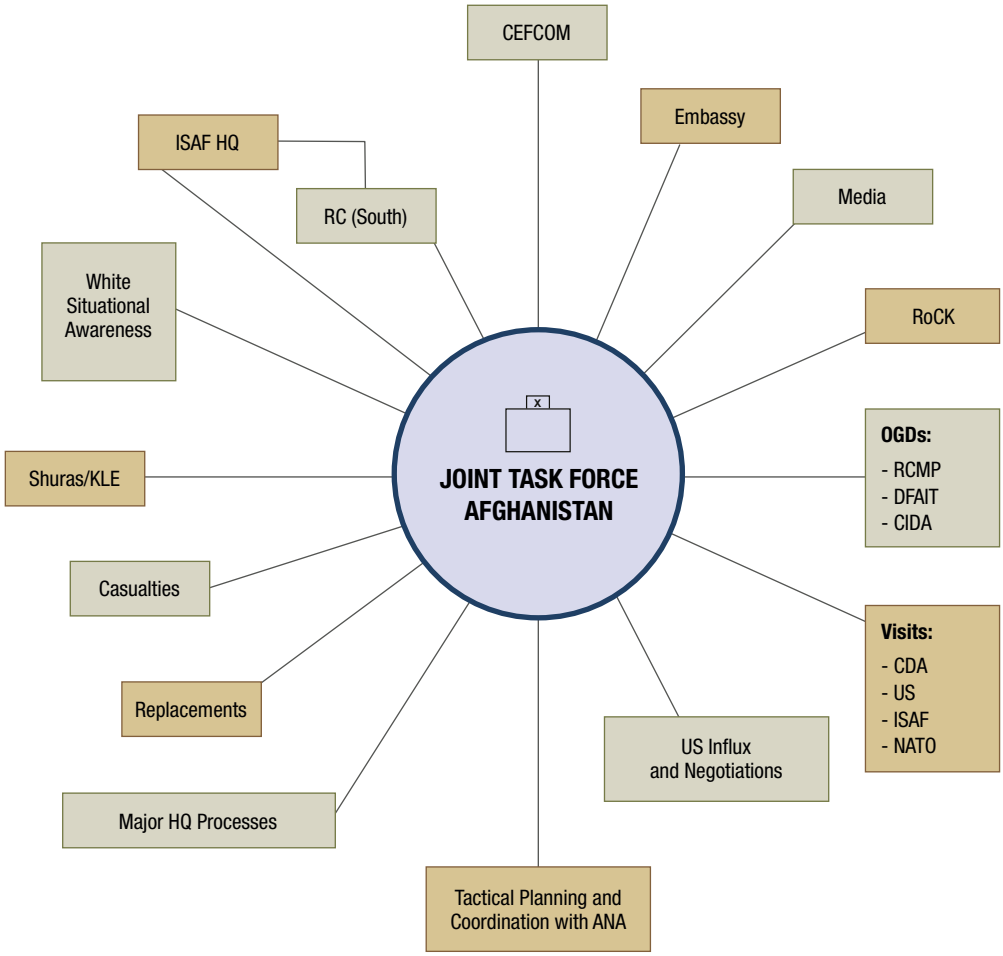
8. monitoring population attitudes.

A key "benchmark," in Thompson's vision, was having "platoon-sized police stations at the sub-district level with professionalized police, that aggressively patrol their patch, being both visible and respected by the population." Dahla Dam, polio eradication, and schools had little or nothing to do with this. In effect, the long-standing tension between "security" and "development" remained in play. Police professionalization was now "number one priority." Second was the acquisition of another Afghan National Army kandak to free up the police. The incoming battle group, TF 3-08, based on 3rd Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment, was to deepen the hold in Pashmul, Asheque, Panjwayi, Sperwan and Arghandab, and protect the hold across Zharey, Panjwayi, Arghandab and lower Shah Wali Kot and, as directed, support the Dahla Dam project. 2-2 Infantry out in Maywand was to deepen and protect the hold in Hutal, clear Band-e Timor, define and shape Garmabak Pass, and secure Ghorak District Centre. The PRT was to now coordinate Build-Enable efforts through the Joint District Coordination Centres, an important change. CIVPOL would continue with police training and the Kandahar City Security Plan. The OMLT would relinquish its role at TF Zharey and focus on police professionalization and rifle kandak capacity development.[11]

TF Kandahar should have been solely focused on these activities. The reality was, however, that there was a finite amount of potential human effort in the JTF-A headquarters, and operational activities were only part of what the headquarters was doing. In essence, TF Kandahar was overwhelmed by too many inputs and it had to respond to all of them (see Figure 4-2). Of these, visits were one of the most problematic as the balance between maintaining support from interested parties in Canada, and the absorptive capacity of a headquarters and its units to show them the war swung back and forth. Another was the large amount of reporting that TF Kandahar had to do: Regional Command (South), ISAF HQ, CEFCOM, the OGDs, the Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan, and so on. Casualty reporting (both men and machines) and investigations of significant incidents assumed higher priority than in any other past war because of their possible information operations impact.[12] Tactical planning with the Afghan National Army's 1-205 Brigade was a painstaking process due in equal parts to language and the differences between Canadian and a quasi-Soviet staff systems.[13]

There was only one Development Advisor from CIDA (Jean McCardle). The Representative of Canada in Kandahar (Elissa Golberg) essentially subsumed the Political Advisor position. They had few staff members and in some ways, both attempted to use the PRT as a headquarters surrogate because they could not get more people from Ottawa. This conflicted with PRT operations, which, in turn, caught LCol Woodworth in the middle. There was inevitable interdepartmental friction, which reduced the efficiency of the mechanism. At the same time, ISAF believed that the PRT and OMLT should

FIGURE 4-2:
Pressures, Inputs, and Reporting –
Joint Task Force Afghanistan Headquarters,
2008



*Based on a discussion between the author and Col Jamie Cade, DComd JTF-A HQ, July 2008

Figure 4-2: Pressures, Inputs and Reporting – Joint Task Force Afghanistan, 2008

report to NATO and not a national chain of command and were confounded when Canada effectively ignored ISAF HQ's efforts to suggest that it needed to report progress directly to it.[14] All of these factors challenged Thompson's desire to "deepen the hold." He believed in retrospect, that the senior civilian position for Kandahar should have been a NATO position and not a Canadian one.[15]

The Fall 2008 Relief in Place

By 2008, army planners moved away from summertime relief in place operation and shifted it to late September. Though it was still brutally warm, climatic conditions were nowhere near as extreme as they were in July–August. The relief in place methodology was also improved and, with the new C-17 Globemaster III transports with their defensive systems and huge carrying capacity coming online, relief in place operations became much more efficient. All of this ensured that Canadian soldiers arrived and acclimatized better than before with obviously increased effects on the ground.

The relief in place was conducted throughout September and completed on the 26th of that month. Transfer of authority from LCol Dave Corbould and the 2 PPCLI-led battle group to LCol Roger Barrett and the 3 RCR-led battle group, took place on 21 September. The battle group consisted of M and N Companies, led by Maj Cayle Oberwarth and Maj Rob McBride, respectively; A Squadron, LdSH, led by Maj Ian McDonnell; a Recce Squadron from RCD, led by Maj Dean Tremblay; F Battery, led by Maj Stu Taylor; and the 24 Field Squadron, led by Maj Matt Sandy. The OMLT also changed hands with personnel from 1 RCR, led by Col Joe Shipley, taking over from 3 PPCLI. Personnel from 1 RCR replaced the 3 PPCLI-led OMLT. The NSE rotated as well, with LCol Steve Blair and his team taking over from LCol Casey Horlock and his staff.

Consequently, operations in the districts were conducted by a combination of both rotations for a time in September. The U.S. Army's 2-2 Infantry under LTC Hurlbut had a different rotation schedule and remained in place for nearly a year. As before, the bulk of battle group and OMLT operations were focused on four districts: Panjwayi, Zharey, Arghandab and Maywand.

The Character of the Insurgency in Late 2008

The insurgency in Kandahar Province ran into serious supply and command problems by the summer of 2008. In an interesting parallel, Taliban commanders in Panjwayi complained to the Quetta Shura that too many resources were being allocated to their counterparts in Helmand, and that Kandahar City should be the focus of their operations. The Quetta Shura informed some of the Kandahar commanders that they were reinforcing success: the aggressive counternarcotics programme in Helmand fed the insurgency because of the

grievances it generated, and the Helmand commanders were more willing to get into the fight than their brethren in Kandahar, so the resources went to them. This led to insurgent infighting throughout the summer.[16]

As a result of this and the fact that the Ramadan holiday was approaching, numerous Taliban commanders returned to their safe haven in Pakistan earlier than usual. However, the Quetta Shura leadership ordered them back in and gave them dispensation to wage war during Ramadan. By September, the enemy leaders were back in place in Zharey and Panjwayi. In Zharey, the insurgents, led by Sadiq Agha, re-infiltrated Senjaray. Over in Panjwayi, there was a slow build-up of Nakhonay as a logistics and command node under Mullah Qasim. The supply "ratlines" from Helmand to Maywand to the Horn of Panjwayi were revitalized and enhanced with new ones coming in from the Reg Desert. The consolidation of their bases in Zangabad and Nahlgam occurred concurrently.[17] (See Figure 4-3.)

The Nakhonay build-up led to increased insurgent intimidation in Dand but it also restored linkages to Kandahar City's District 6. That, in turn, paved the way for a massive assassination and intimidation campaign launched in late October and continued well into the new year. At the same time, the northern Kandahar Taliban groups altered their approach to Arghandab in part because they were under new leadership. Instead of driving in, establishing a "liberated zone" and then getting kicked out by coalition action, these groups now conducted their own "shaping" campaign, which employed intimidation as the lead element, followed by selective assassination. In both Arghandab and Kandahar City, the Taliban started with random acts: security targets of opportunity, like a cop on beat patrol. By November, the campaign escalated into high-profile killings of prominent government and security personalities.[18]

The new insurgent emphasis on eastern Panjwayi led to more rocket attacks against KAF launched from the northwest rocket box. The Pakistan–Maruf–Arghistan–Daman supply route remained in play, with rockets supplied to "non-insurgent insurgents" in Daman.[19]

By mid-fall, Canadian analysts saw increased linkages between different insurgent groups within the province and between them and the groups in Helmand. For example, one group in Helmand called on other insurgent groups to support it and mounted the June 2008 Arghandab incursion similar to its November 2007 predecessor. Other insurgent groups were not convinced of the efficacy or probability of success, so they hoarded equipment, supplies and fighters, and did not support the Helmand operations. With new missives from Mullah Omar and the Quetta Shura, coupled with new leadership, these links seemed to be stronger by late 2008. The Helmand/Maywand/Zharey/ Panjwayi complex was stronger than the Ghorak/Khakrez/Shah Wali Kot groups, but that was changing and the new insurgent emphasis on Senjaray, which geographically linked Zharey with Khakrez and

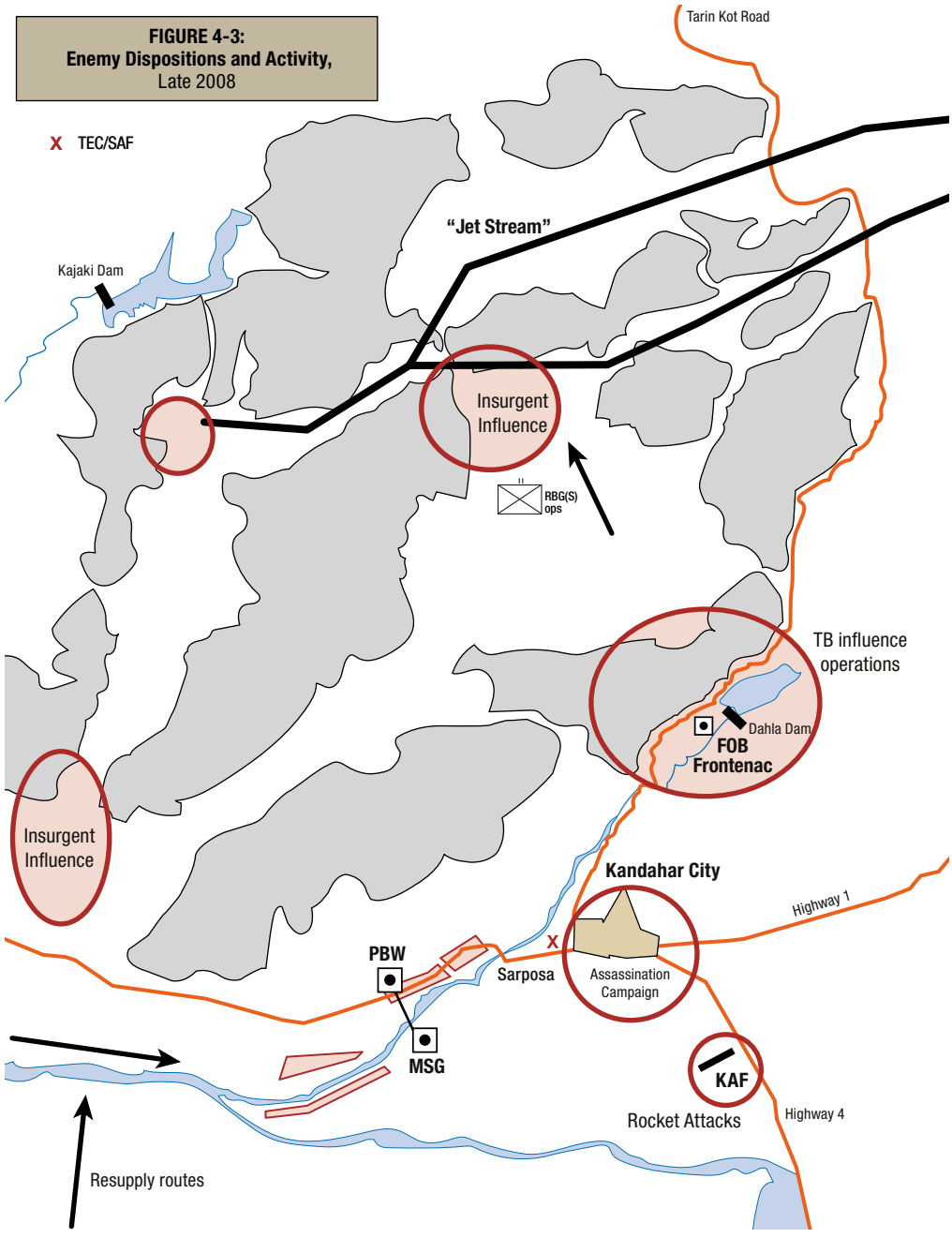


Figure 4-3: Enemy Dispositions and Activity, Late 2008

Arghandab, was one indicator.[20] The Quetta Shura became increasingly concerned, as its city-based assassination campaign gained momentum, that "dissident elements" were taking matters into their own hands and killing people for purposes not related to the movement's aims. Their solution was to craft a form night letter to ensure the veracity of the threat and confirm that the assassination was legitimate.[21] The insurgency also appeared to strengthen its shadow governance in fall 2008. Canadian analysts picked up on the appointment of more and more shadow "district governors." For example, Arghandab now had a Taliban parallel governor as well as a parallel judge.[22]

Panjwayi District Operations, September 2008

By September 2008, the pro-government forces lay down consisted of:

1. Strong Point Mushan, manned by Afghan National Army troops from 2nd Kandak and Canadian mentors;

2. Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar, which held the infantry company headquarters, a Canadian artillery troop and engineers;

3. COP Zangabad and Haji, manned by Canadian infantry;

4. FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, with the tanks squadron, OMLT HQ, and CMT-1;

5. a plethora of police and army checkpoints in and around Bazaar-e Panjwayi, including Three Tank Hill slightly south of the town; and

6. the New District Centre east of the town.

A police checkpoint on Route Fosters East was also in place at Salehan. A combination of Canadian P-OMLT, American police mentors, and a DynCorp logistics expert mentored the Panjwayi police forces as much as possible. (See Figure 4-4.)

Despite the removal of COP Talukan during Operation MUTAFIQ TANDAR, Canadian forces remained "trapped in the TI" and surrounded with large numbers of homemade IEDs and anti-tank mines. The enemy now employed more and more PMN anti-personnel mines. This situation forced the Canadians to continue the heavily armed resupply operations for Mushan, Zangabad and Haji. The battle group had to strike a balance between four activities:

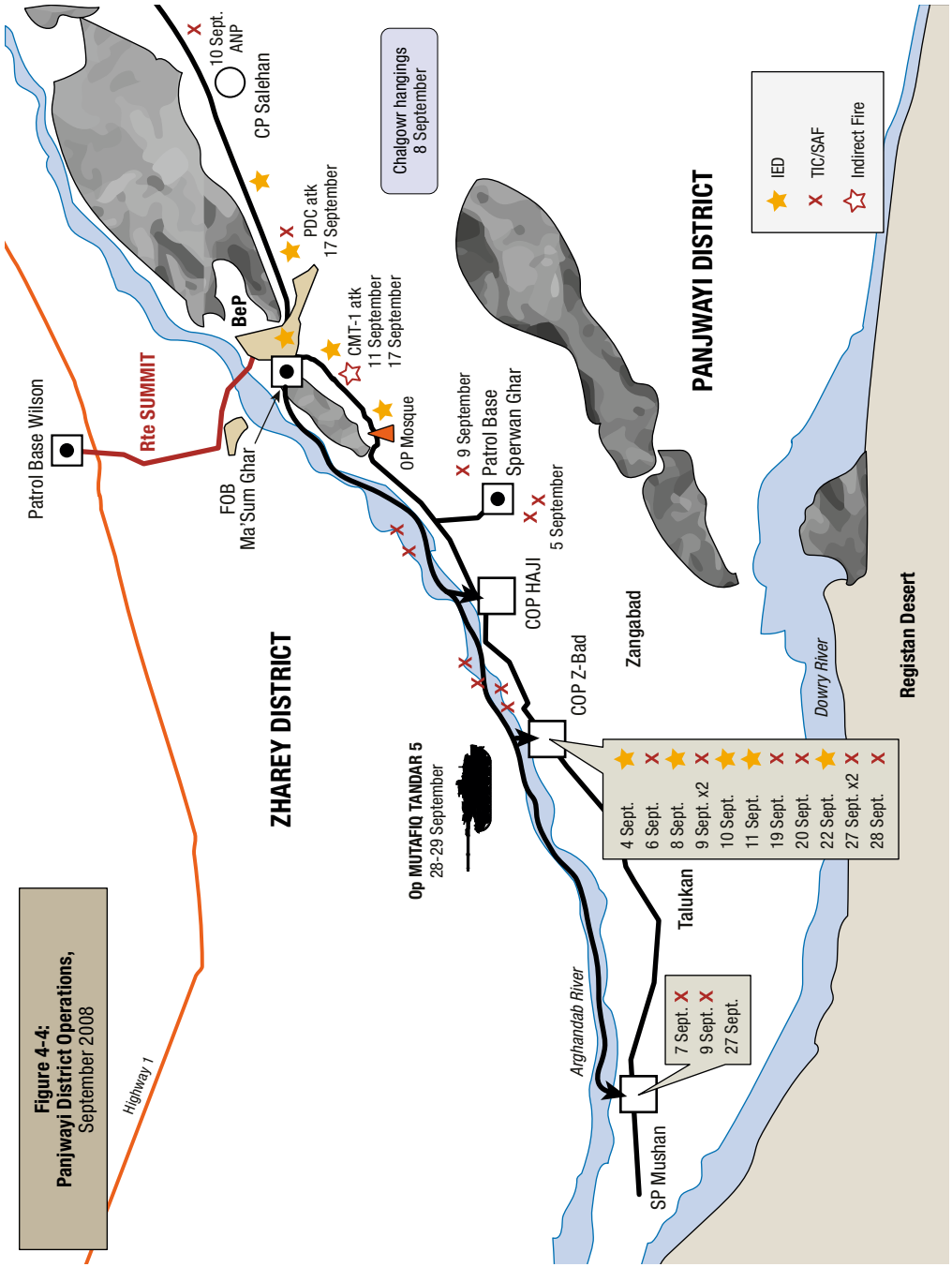


Figure 4-4: Panjwayi District Operations, September 2008

1. the MUTAFIQ TANDAR "river runs";

2. morning "route sweeps" along the roads looking for nocturnally placed IEDs;

3. an irregular patrol schedule which launched forces into the Zangabad communities;

4. the provision of protection or QRF assistance for the CMT-1 working the Fosters West paving project; and

5. the patrol of Stability Box SPERWAN in support of police and CIMIC efforts there.

Essentially, this applied to the 2nd Kandak companies deployed in Panjwayi as well. If the battle group commander wanted to conduct a larger operation elsewhere, this meant reducing one or even more of these activities, which, in turn, had spillover effects on the stability of the district.

The enemy probably understood this dilemma. As a result, approximately a quarter of enemy activity that month was directed against COP Zangabad. The removal of COP Talukan, ironically, permitted the insurgents to direct more resources against Zangabad and Mushan and it opened a gap that permitted the insurgent network in the southern part of the horn of Panjwayi better communications with the Nahlgam network in Zharey. From 4 September to 28 September, COP Zangabad was subjected to 14 attacks. Five of these amounted to mortar harassment: a single round or two flung at the position. Others involved coordinated small-arms fire from multiple directions aimed at the small fort and its tower. On 4 September, for example, 3 Platoon responded to fire from south and west of the combat outpost by deploying a LAV III outside the position, supported by a pair of OH-58D recce helicopters to engage the shooters.[23] Three days later, the insurgents mounted an identical operation: the combat outpost occupants called in 155mm fire instead.[24] The annoying mortar was eventually identified and engaged using counter-battery detection systems and artillery but another was soon in action. Interestingly, an informant in the village where the mortar was kept reported its presence to the Panjwayi police and National Directorate of Security and volunteered to mark it and call the Joint District Coordination Centre the next time it deployed.[25] Again, on 9 September, two section-sized enemy elements poured fire at the combat outpost, which provoked a response with LAV III 25mm fire and 155mm artillery fire. Enemy operations dropped off for nearly a week.[26]

Strong Point Mushan, on the other hand, was only involved in three incidents during the entire month of September. The Afghan National Army and the Canadian mentors were able to patrol the bazaar and keep the security bubble propped up.[27] As for Stability Box SPERWAN, the insurgents ran into a Recce Platoon disruption patrol, probed the gate area trying to determine where the sniper detachment was, and then backed off and resorted to night letter intimidation in the box.[28] The Fosters West paving project had its civilian workers ambushed on 4 September; they were shot at in a drive-by incident on 11 September, and then mortared on 27 September, but work continued. Two nasty IED attacks occurred on Fosters West: the Afghan police were the targets.[29]

Photo Credit: Author

Synchronizing development with counter-insurgency operations produced ad hoc forces like the Construction Management Organization and its Construction Management Teams. With the Canadian International Development Agency unable to provide capabilities in Zharey and Panjwayi, Construction Management Team 1, pictured here on Route Fosters, worked to employ local people in infrastructure improvement projects.

The situation in Panjwayi East focused on the area east of Bazaar-e Panjwayi. A routine road move by Canadian troops along Fosters East was targeted with an IED that flipped a LAV III onto its side, killing Sgt Scott Shipway and wounding seven other Canadian soldiers. An Afghan police patrol working the road east of checkpoint Salehan was ambushed. Chillingly, the insurgents resorted to extreme intimidation in Chalghowr

on 8 September, where they hanged four Afghan civilians accused of working for the government. A number of Fosters paving project workers were also kidnapped and taken to Salavat, beaten and released. The insurgents escalated their intimidation campaign on 17 September, when they deployed a suicide bomber into Bazaar-e Panjwayi. An Afghan police patrol with Canadian P-OMLT mentors encountered this man, who raised his arms and chanted, revealing the bomb. The Canadians shot and killed him before he could detonate the device. That day, insurgents attacked the New District Centre and deployed another IED against it.[30]

Sorting out who was responsible for what piece of the security puzzle remained the prerogative of the district leader, the security shura and the Joint District Coordination Centre. The main concern was the significantly increased enemy activity in and around Bazaar-e Panjwayi and points east. The biggest problem was the policing situation. Incredibly, the P-OMLT determined that only one-third of the police in Panjwayi had gone through Focused District Development training. Qualified personnel had been redeployed to Kandahar City and elsewhere by the provincial chief of police, leaving Panjwayi, once again, in the hands of unqualified police who antagonized the civilian population, especially around Three Tank Hill.[31]

Photo Credit: Author

An increase in violence in Bazaar-e Panjwayi led to an Afghan National Army and police patrolling surge in the town. Here, Capt Chuck Pitkin and his Afghan counterparts arrest members of an illegally armed group on the main road.

Finally, Brig.-Gen. Matiullah fired the district chief of police, Essa Khan. And Bismillah Khan, who had previously been fired by Matiullah's predecessor, was brought back in. This did not bode well: Khan was a friend of Haji Baran and had connections to the Dastagiri group. The P-OMLT predicted this would lead to trouble in the future.[32] The combined pressure of the P-OMLT, the American Police Mentoring Team, and DynCorp was applied to Khan at a Joint District Coordination Centre meeting, where he was told that they would not put up with any shenanigans. Bismillah Khan surprised everybody by conducting an aggressive sweep of insurgent ambush positions on Fosters West. On the downside, the 2nd Kandak commander had problems with Khan in the past and refused to cooperate on joint patrols. The Canadians on the OMLT, the P-OMLT and the Joint District Coordination Centre worked to improve the relationships in order to gain the synergy they wanted, but it was glacier-like progress.[33]

The police mentors were pleasantly surprised, however, with the arrival of Mohammad Nabi from Kandahar City. Brig.-Gen. Matiullah was no fool and wanted his man propping up Bismillah Jan. Nabi was a professional and experienced officer and set out to build a proper support structure to facilitate Khan's operations. However, on 16 September, the New District Centre was attacked with small-arms fire. While Canadian artillery provided illumination, the police QRF, led by Nabi, was ambushed on the way to the firefight by a separate insurgent element. Nabi was badly wounded and later died. This was yet another blow to district security.[34] The police later apprehended nine insurgents who admitted to assassinating Nabi. In a convoluted sequence of events, the triggermen escaped from National Directorate of Security custody in Panjwayi after having been repatriated there inexplicably from the holding facility in Kandahar City! Haji Baran used this incident to place doubts in the Canadians' minds about the reliability of the police.[35]

More problematic were revelations from the Joint District Coordination Centre about Haji Baran:

> The [district leader] mentioned for the first time that he had what he called "legitimate connections" with insurgents. He told us that the NDS chief in Kandahar City introduced him to several individuals that were working for the government and was told to support them wherever possible. One of the insurgents talked to him on the phone from Band-e Timor in front of us. The DL expects to receive valuable information from this man in the future and he was adamant that this issue not be discussed.[36]

Ironically, however, Baran was formally accredited as the district leader, which now meant that DFAIT representatives from the PRT would now deal with him. Lara Romaniuk subsequently came out for talks with Baran in mid-September.[37]

The main event for the incoming battle group, however, was Operation MUTAFIQ TANDAR 5. Mushan, Zangabad and Haji needed resupply and it was now A Squadron's turn. Led by Maj McDonnell, the combat team worked its way down the Arghandab River on 28 September. The first contact consisted of five suspected insurgents emplacing a mortar: embarrassingly, the mortar turned out to be a water pump. There were no civilian casualties. Moving on toward Zangabad, the column was engaged three times with combinations of small-arms, RPG and 82mm recoilless rifle fire supported with mortars. The tanks fired back with 120mm canister and HEAT rounds, while the 25mm cannons from the LAV IIIs picked off the enemy as they sought to reposition the ambushes. The joint terminal attack controller was able to vector a U.S. Marine Corps F-18 onto a mortar position, destroying it with GBU-38 bombs. As the armoured column breached into the combat outpost, they were engaged with five rounds of mortar fire. M-777 artillery took out that position.

The combat engineers used their Badger AEVs to make improvements to the Zangabad positions while the armoured leaguer resupplied the forces. LCol Barrett believed that "The large amount of combat power that pushed down the Arghandab River will undoubtedly draw the insurgents' attention throughout the [Zharey and Panjwayi area] and I expect the insurgents to engage the combat team on its return to FOB Ma'Sum Ghar."[38] There were two small attempts by the enemy to interfere with the movement back along the river but the battle group reported that the enemy broke contact on both occasions. The reality was this: MUTAFIQ TANDAR did not draw enemy resources or attention away from eastern Panjwayi, nor did it seem to materially affect enemy operations in western Panjwayi. The enemy were fighting a different war in the eastern part of the district while in the west it was not clear who was pinning whom down.

Zharey District Operations, September 2008

The security forces lay down in Zharey District by September had combinations of Canadian mentors and their police and army counterparts in seven locations. There were strong points at Ghundy Ghar, Lakokhel and Pulchakan situated 2 kilometres south of Highway 1, with four more, Howz-e Madad, Spin Pir, FOB Wilson and Asheque on Highway 1. Stability Box JUNO had a sub-district police station, and the former FOB Zettelmeyer, now used by the Blue Hackle private security force. The PSSs Sangsar and Kolk were now closed and efforts to build another along Route Langley ended with the collapse of the CMT-2 road project. BGen Laroche's plan to encircle the insurgents in

central Zharey with a lattice of police sub-stations connected by paved roads was recognized at this point as completely untenable. And, as events in September demonstrated once again, it was the Canadians and Afghans who were being contained by being forced to defend tactical infrastructure which, in turn, limited their ability to patrol and project an enduring presence in the district. (See Figure 4-5a and b.)

On the plus side, the enemy was unable to mount large ambushes along Highway 1 due to the combined effects of Operation LUMBAR and due the casualties incurred by Operations TIMUS PREEM and ASP-E JANUBI. The only ambushes west of FOB Wilson were on the highway, and this was limited to two events in September. These occurred east of Spin Pir in the area north of where the former PSSs Sangsar and Kolk would have interfered with enemy north-south movement.

Canadian operations focused initially on Operation JANGISIOUX patrolling around Patrol Base Wilson and into the communities west of Route Summit in Stability Box JUNO. These were usually platoon-sized presence and disruption patrols. Early on, most of the patrolling matrix related to Highway 1 security: the OMLT and the Afghans from 3rd Kandak, plus whatever police could be mustered, did morning route sweeps and tried to do night patrols around the strong points when they could. Another patrol area was Pashmul North, pointing west, where the new police station was under construction. For September, there was minimal contact in the JANGISIOUX patrol area and along Highway 1. The Pashmul North area was hotter. CMT-2 was pulled away from the cancelled Route Langley job and was working up a project with local people to clear the irrigation system around Route Summit when they were ambushed on 2 September. The engineers returned fire and the enemy broke contact. The following day, a mounted patrol from C Company was engaged with 82mm recoilless rifle fire. The HEAT round penetrated the vehicle's armour, detonating the ammunition, and killing Cpl Andrew Grenon, Cpl Michael Seggie and Pte Chad Horn. Five more Canadians were wounded in the strike.[39] MCpl Michael Bursey and Cpl Mark Ejdrygiewicz, while under enemy fire, repeatedly went into the LAV III, whose ammunition was starting to cook off, and extricated the casualties. Pte Jordan Kochan worked to keep them alive while under high volumes of enemy fire until the QRF could arrive. All three men were awarded the Medal of Military Valour for their actions.

C Company got one up on the insurgents during a patrol on 15 September: a premature IED firing alerted the Canadian platoon that they were about to get ambushed and then found themselves engaged from three separate positions with small arms and RPGs. The Canadians laid down suppressive fire and called in the M-777s. Sixty-two 155mm high explosive rounds shredded the enemy in their positions.[40] Inexplicably, there was no more enemy activity in the JUNO area until 30 September, when an Afghan police patrol got into a TIC and conducted a fighting withdrawal back to PSS Pashmul North.

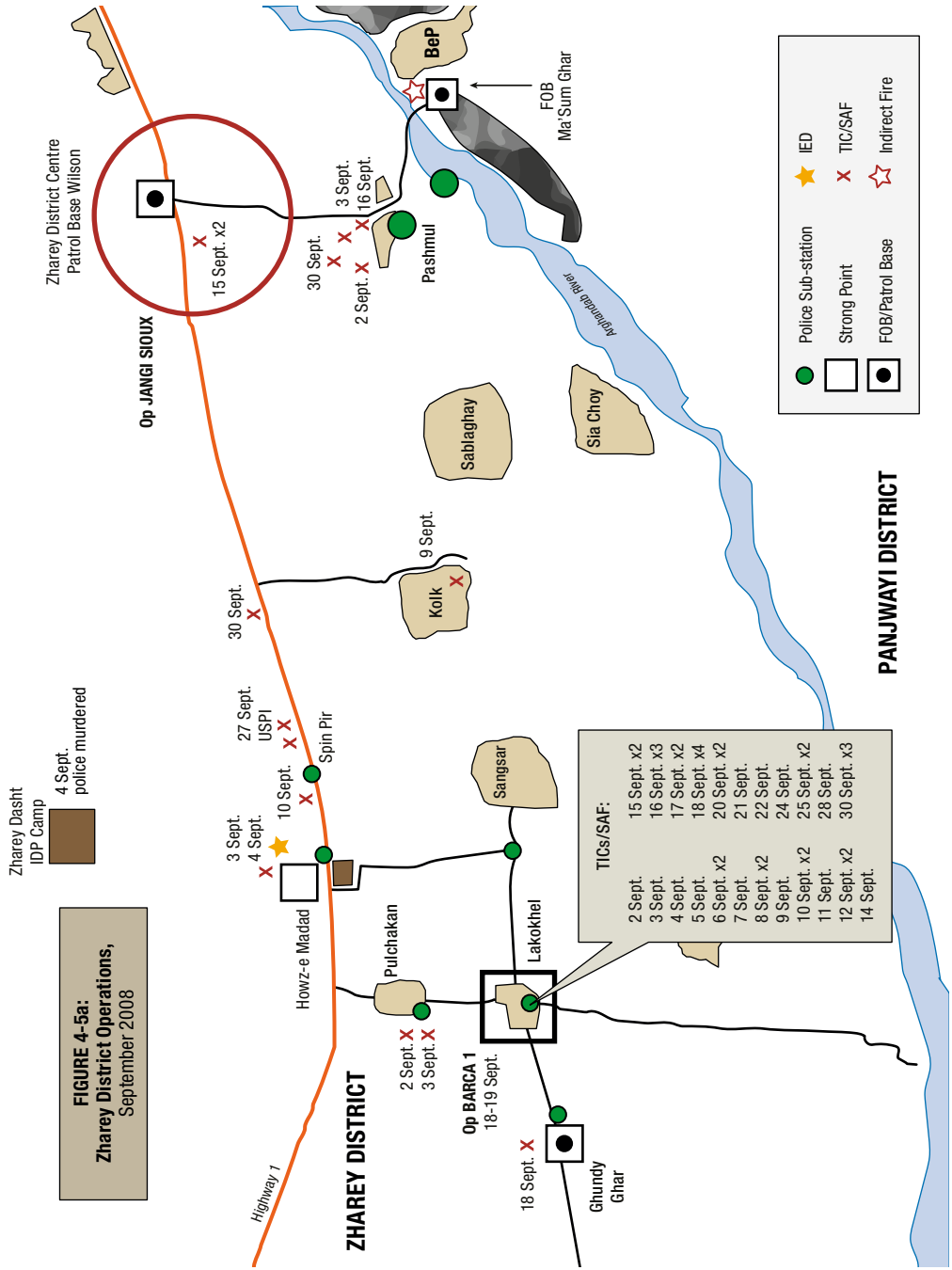


Figure 4-5a: Zharey District Operations, September 2008

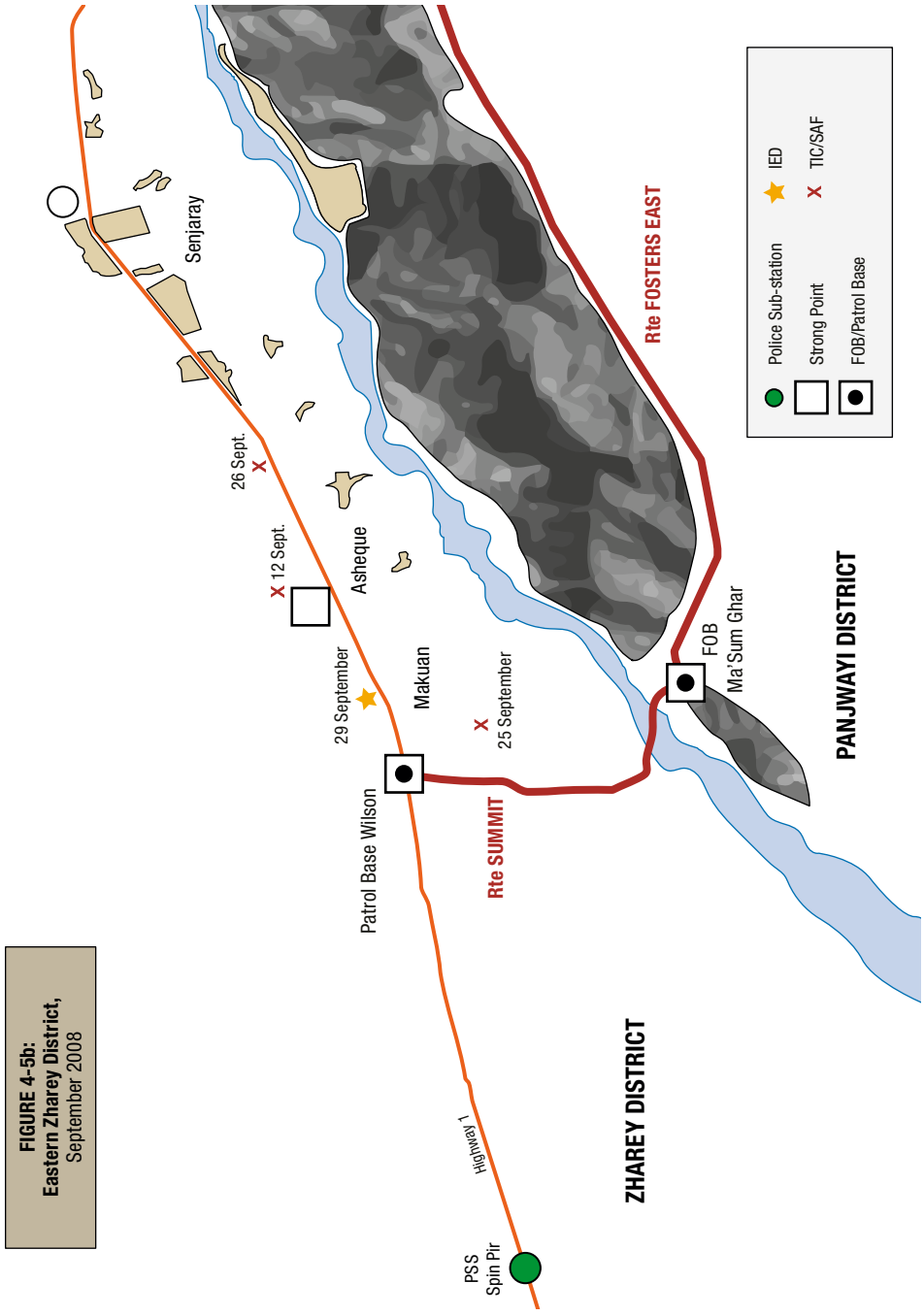


FIGURE 4-5b:
Eastern Zharey District,
September 2008

Figure 4-5b: Eastern Zharey District, September 2008

In September, the bulk of the action centred on Strong Point Lakokhel. For an incredible 23 days, the occupants of Lakokhel, 2nd Company from 3rd Kandak and their Canadian mentors from team 73B, were subjected to every type of weapon that the insurgency had in its arsenal at the time. For the most part, the insurgents used "shoot and scoot" attacks: these involved a small number of rounds fired at the strong point by a small force that immediately dispersed and disappeared into the lush fields and dilapidated compound complexes nearby. After the first five days, the battle group planned Operation BARCA to clear the nearby compounds and demolish them using contractors. The contractors refused to show up, so BARCA was delayed. The Canadian mentors were prepared when they sortied on patrol on 6 September. The enemy engaged the first patrol but the mentors were able to call in an Excalibur strike, which ended the contact. A second patrol was engaged later that day: a 2,000-pound GBU-31 bomb and 12 rounds of 155mm fire silenced the enemy fire. That evening, an enemy sniper fired a round at the Afghan command post.[41]

Photo Credit: Courtesy of Captain Sheldon Maerz

On 3 September 2008, the enemy attacked a LAV III with an 82mm recoilless rifle, killing three and wounding five Canadians. Three Canadians were awarded the Medal of Military Valour for their actions in the rescue. This photo, taken from Three Tank Hill, shows the smoke pall from the burning LAV III and the subsequent artillery strike by the M-777s against the ambushers.

After four more days of "shoot and scoot," an Afghan army resupply convoy was ambushed on its way to Lakokhel, with no casualties, but on 10 September an IED wounded members of a patrol. Three more "shoot and scoot" contacts, followed by RPG attacks against another resupply convoy, resulted in another round of 155mm fire directed at the elusive opponents. The TF Kandahar intelligence staff concluded that the enemy wanted to pressurize the Afghans to remove Lakokhel as it was interfering with their freedom of movement in western Zharey. The mentors asked for more UAV coverage to help define the enemy but after a number of ambushes against patrol covered by UAVs, the combination of terrain and dispersion limited an effective and timely response.[42]

On 18 September, Operation BARCA was finally launched. BARCA brought in 3rd Company and its Canadian mentors, plus a Canadian LAV III platoon and combat engineers with Badger AEVs. The Afghans and mentors provided the cordon while the engineers swept and then bulldozed compounds to clear fields of fire. Unfortunately, after 50% of the task was completed, both Badgers broke down from coolant leaks and blown seals. The enemy engaged the cordon but again they could not be defined or engaged. The next day, three "shoot and scoot" contacts occurred and then the enemy attacked a LAV III with an RPG. Eleven rounds of 155mm high explosive were brought down, and an OH-58D helicopter took out "squirters."[43] MCpl Michael Trauner's vehicle was hit with the RPG, which disabled its 25mm cannon. The flurry of enemy small-arms fire pinned down the dismounted troops. MCpl Trauner manned the pintle-mounted machine gun and laid down covering fire, and effectively suppressed the enemy attack, which allowed the troops to reorganize and defeat the enemy so that the team could continue with its mission. MCpl Trauner was awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.

Five more days of "shoot and scoot," followed by artillery fire directed at an enemy position, plus the inability to gain positive identification with an orbiting MQ-9 Reaper was enough. The Afghans brought in mortars and responded to the attacks, while plans were made to deploy Canadian snipers. The nearly month-long affair ended with a call for jihad against the Canadians broadcasted via mosque loudspeakers in the Lakokhel area.[44]

Another problem that emerged for TF Kandahar by late September was the community of Senjaray. The destabilization of this important sub-district brought on by the assassination of Habibullah Jan and the removal of Asadullah Khalid's militia after he departed produced dividends for the insurgents. The Zharey security shura was informed that the civilian population in Senjaray was in the process of conducting truce talks with the Taliban. Zharey District leader Sahardi told the Canadians that he "was strongly against this but has little influence as the [people] require a safe environment for the winter." There were further reports that the population was now paying Zakat (a religious tithe) to the Taliban,[45] which meant the religious leadership in Senjaray was also compromised. LCol Barrett was

Photo Credit: DND AR2008-J011-032

Photo Credit: DND AR2008-J011-043

Photo Credit: DND AR2008-J011-116

Raiding operations by 3rd Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment were conducted in Zharey District throughout fall 2008 as continual attempts were made to prop up the police sub-stations. This was one such operation in the Kolk area.

exceptionally concerned: he thought that if something was not done and soon, "operations during the winter would be compromised."[46] Additionally, Senjaray's special status with the Afghans going back to the Habibullah Jan days meant that the chief of police for Zharey District "does not have the power to influence Senjaray, nor does he control the [Afghan police] there."[47] This was not surprising. There were few police in Zharey who were trained, and the district had still not undergone Focused District Development. There was a feud between the police and the National Directorate of Security: the Zharey police physically blocked the National Directorate of Security from giving information to the P-OMLT and the PRT detachment.[48] The police at the Zharey refugee camp were infiltrated and four murdered as they slept.[49] Contractors reported to the PRT that they feared being shot by the police if they complained to the CIMIC teams.[50] The Sisyphean efforts of the P-OMLT continued.

Arghandab District Operations, September 2008

Arghandab security forces consisted of Recce Squadron operating from FOB Frontenac, an Afghan infantry company with Canadian mentors based temporarily out of a school in Hasan Tabin, and a network of Afghan police checkpoints on main routes throughout the district. For the most part, a Canadian intelligence summary captured the state of affairs in September:

> HUMINT reporting indicates insurgents have ceased their information operations activity in Arghandab. Intimidation, kidnapping, and assassination peaked in early August but decreased over the past two weeks. [The insurgents] feel their aim is achieved. This reporting also suggests insurgents have gained freedom of movement throughout the district, coerced support from the population, and that the ANP are not patrolling outside of their checkpoints…while insurgents may not be an immediate threat to the district, these reports are likely that local nations think otherwise. This perceived threat may have the effect the insurgents are after, and could possibly sever local national support to [the government and ISAF] if they feel they are not receiving the protection they think they need.[51]

This cogent piece of analysis was not effectively acted upon during the rest of 2008. The police, TF Kandahar confirmed, patrolled outside their checkpoints. Recce Squadron conducted numerous presence patrols and kept a watchful eye as much as it could on the district. The Afghan army company did effectively patrol from its location. CIMIC monitored the District Development Assembly as it went about its work. But none of this affected the population's perceptions. For example, elders told the Canadian recce soldiers that "whoever controls Jelawur controls Arghandab."[52] But what did "control" mean? Physical occupation? Psychological dominance of anti-government tribal elements?

The district leader, Karimullah, was of limited assistance; he had been on extended leave in Dubai when the intimidation campaign was underway.[53] Canadian armoured soldiers in their Coyotes and Afghan police in their Rangers could not fill the leadership vacuum. But the insurgents, what senior Afghans now called "The Commission," could. This body apparently included all of the senior insurgent leadership for the northern districts.

As if to spite the ASIC, "The Commission" ramped up intimidation in September with a fresh series of kidnappings, 14 village leaders in four weeks, and a spate of night letters. The kidnapped people's families were forced to purchase weapons on the black market and turn them over to the insurgents in order to release their loved ones. Others were taken away, beaten and released. Recce Squadron took three IED strikes on 4, 12 and 21 September. None of these attacks were lethal but they mobility-killed three Coyotes which reduced Recce Squadron's patrolling sortie rate. Water resupply trucks headed for FOB Frontenac were also hit. By the end of the month, Recce Squadron was reporting an abnormal pattern of life involving increased numbers of fighting age males in northern Arghandab.[54]

Maywand District Operations, September 2008

In Maywand District, the Canadian effort was in support of 2-2 Infantry as it expanded its operations throughout September. FOB Ramrod, the 2-2 Infantry base, was almost completed west of Hutal. There was FOB Hutal, which encompassed a facility near the

Maywand District Centre and included an American infantry company, Recon Company from 4th Kandak with Canadian mentors, a P-OMLT team and a Canadian CIMIC detachment from the PRT. Eventually, a pair of M-777 guns and their crew from [?] Battery deployed to FOB Ramrod to improve fire support coverage. There was a lot of cross-pollination between the Canadian, American and Afghan forces. American snipers went out with Canadian mentors and Afghan reconnaissance troops, while Canadian CIMIC worked with all comers. This included a USAID representative.

2-2 Infantry's familiarization included Operation MAWREGA, a sweep into Band-e Timor. 2-2 Infantry's intelligence staff determined that the bulk of overt enemy activity was up in the Garmabak area and that the insurgents tried to maintain a low profile in the southern part of the district because it was so crucial to keeping their Zharey efforts resupplied.[55] Unfortunately, 2-2 Infantry lost Pte Vincent C. Winston Jr. in a catastrophic IED attack that wounded four others during the operation.

There was a lot of positive activity happening in Maywand. The police were undergoing Focused District Development in September, and 125 newly trained police were due back from the Regional Training Center. A new district centre was under construction. Afghan National Civil Order Police provided effective security as CIMIC assessed that the National Solidarity Programme had, in fact, produced a significant number of wells. Canadian CIMIC facilitated USAID assessments in areas that were relatively permissive.[56] The district leader was a distinct improvement from the notorious Haji Saifullah. He was a proactive leader who wanted a standardized coalition approach whereby ISAF formed a "ring of steel" around villages, his police went in, and he called out the village leadership for an impromptu shura. His main issue in September was that his staff of five would not deploy out to Hutal from Kandahar City, so his administrative capacity was limited. CIMIC reportage sent back positive impressions during this time for the communities surrounding Hutal, and the Specialist Engineer Team sent a contractor out to look at improving the bazaar: he was kidnapped by some entity but this did not intimidate him and he returned to complete the survey.[57]

Elsewhere, however, there was substantial Taliban intimidation, which involved scaring the population away from government-run medical clinics using fear-mongering about the bad things that might be done to them. The insurgents' early warning system was judged to be extremely effective and responsive in the district. Intimidation was directed against some of the projects undertaken by locals through the District Development Assembly–Community Development Council chain: a locally managed road paving project was laced with IEDs which were uncovered during an Afghan–Canadian patrol. And, as might be expected, the insurgents were not averse to shooting up FOB Hutal and scooting away. Rockets were also used against the district centre, to no effect.[58]

At this point, however, there was a lack of coalition synergy in Maywand. In some ways, Maywand was in the same position that Panjwayi District was in 2007. There was no Joint District Coordination Centre, for example. Reconstruction and development was a patched-up lash-up with little interest from the PRT. Many of the moving parts were present but it was necessary to get those gears to mesh in order to stabilize Maywand District.

Kandahar City Operations, September–October 2008

The post-Sarposa shift of focus to the trials and travails of Kandahar City was reinforced on 8 September, when two suicide bombers dressed as police officers detonated inside provincial police headquarters wounding 38 people killing two. The Afghan police subsequently found three emplaced IEDs on first-responder routes to the headquarters building.[59] An already planned security operation, MARKAZ AMALIAT, was in place to provide a post-Ramadan security presence in the city. This operation was accelerated. In the interim, there were five more IED attacks and a direct fire attack, all directed against Afghan police.[60] 1-205 Brigade ordered 5th Kandak, the combat service support kandak, to deploy 80 maintenance and logistics personnel into the city. Commanded by the Signals company commander, the OMLT was seriously concerned that support capacity to the brigade's deployed kandaks in Zharey and Panjwayi would be affected.[61]

Operation MARKAZ AMALIAT was altered to include L Company from 42 Royal Marines Commando, the new Regional Battle Group (South). L Company was handed off to LCol Woodworth at the PRT. This gave Kandahar City, in effect, three companies for presence patrolling. The operation was delayed 24 hours because the UN insisted that TF Kandahar recognize the UN International Day of Peace and not conduct operations.[62]

L Company, supported by a Canadian CIMIC team, established a patrol base in the "seam" between Dand and the southwestern districts of the city. There, they found a population who was terrified that the Taliban would target them if they provided any form of assistance to the ISAF forces.[63] This was not surprising; previous Canadian PRTs going back to 2005 identified District 6 as problematic. L Company established a random series of vehicle checkpoints on Route Lake Effect, which likely had a temporary disruptive effect on the insurgent ratline into the city.[64] PRT Force Protection mounted patrols in various city districts to provide a visible presence.

Unfortunately, the enemy shifted tactics. On 28 September, a pair of assassins gunned down Lt.-Col. Malalai Kakar of the Kandahar City police. This killing made international news in part because Western media had already turned her into a poster girl for gender equality in southern Afghanistan, which in turn raised her public profile and made her a desirable information operations target. What went unreported was the assassination of two members of the Zabul Provincial Shura in Kandahar City, along with their bodyguards,

while they were socializing with friends. These were the opening shots in what amounted to a city-wide assassination campaign that extended from September 2008 to January 2009.[65]

The deteriorating security situation in the city affected plans to go forward with 25 more Community Development Councils and district manager facilities in addition to wells and an improved water system. UN HABITAT was CIDA's facilitating partner on these projects to the tune of $22 million and $7 million, respectively. However, UN HABITAT staff "lacked confidence" in security and moved the UN HABITAT director to an "undisclosed location" for security.[66] This was an appropriate move. The next day, the Director of Work and Social Affairs was assassinated while driving in to work. Three days later, a senior Barakzai elder, Ali Ahmad Khan, and his son, who was a bodyguard to President Karzai, were killed in a drive-by shooting at a mosque. A second senior Barakzai leader, Haji Ali Mohammad, was also shot and killed.[67] Canadian ISTAR reportage confirmed that a 30-man unit, led by Mullah Abdul Bari, had arrived in the city and was dispersed into assassination teams with orders to target government officials and tribal elders.[68] The teams also employed kidnapping as a tool. They snatched the eight-year-old son of a UNAMA worker on 23 October in order to get him to stop working on reconstruction projects.[69]

To his credit, the Mayor of Kandahar City, Ghulam Haider Hamidi, refused to be intimidated, and continued to work with the PRT and UN HABITAT during this dangerous time to improve the city and its services for the benefit of its citizens.

Reorganization of the Operational Mentor Liaison Team and Relations with the Afghan National Security Forces

The opportunity to reorganize OMLT operations arrived in September with the incoming rotation, led by Col Joe Shipley, and based primarily on officers and men from 1 RCR. OMLT reorganization became a major political problem, however. The existing TF Zharey structure, established under BGen Laroche and utilized in the first half of 2008, was considered deficient in many quarters. The efforts of Maj Bob Ritchie to make TF Zharey work were recognized by all. However, TF Kandahar was forced to accept that the OMLT was running Zharey District like a battle group and not actually mentoring the Afghans as much as they should have been. The OMLT was not structured, in terms of equipment, to do the job it was doing. It had RG-31 vehicles, but no maintenance or supply system similar to the battle group, nor was it manned to handle a tactical operations centre in the same way the battle group was.[70] Simply put, the Afghan army was not a manoeuvre element of TF Kandahar in the same way 3 RCR and 2-2 Infantry were. TF Kandahar decided to disband TF Zharey and turn battle space management of the district over to Maj Rob McBride, the officer commanding N Company, on 13 September. Elements in Ottawa viewed this move as a retrograde activity that flew in the face of the progress that the

Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan wanted to see and report through their "benchmark" system in order to satisfy media and opposition critics of the mission. There was substantial pushback. BGen Thompson and his staff, to their credit, resisted it.[71]

That was not all. The idea of a "strike" kandak emerged in summer 2008. The demand for more Afghan forces in the field led to a reorganization of the green-yellow-red cycle that had been in lay for the three 1-205 Brigade kandaks since 2007. Col François Riffou suggested that one kandak that was partially trained should occupy the Highway 1 strong points doing static tasks and route clearance patrols, while another should man the Zharey and Panjwayi strong points. The third infantry kandak should become a mobile force to be used as required.[72] There were two views on how this "strike" kandak might be used: the limited view was that it would operate in the areas between the other two kandaks in Zharey and Panjwayi, while a more expansive view was that the "strike" kandak might operate like the Regional Battle Group (South), possibly for 205 Corps.[73]

Unfortunately for TF Kandahar, the Canadian-mentored 2nd Kandak from 1-205 Brigade was the designated Strike Kandak as of September 2008. The implications of this change were significant. The existing lay down of 1-205 Brigade had a kandak in Zharey, another in Panjwayi, and parts of a third in Arghandab and Maywand. All were tied to tactical infrastructure conducting local security patrols and trying to work with the Afghan police. Removal of the Strike Kandak for deployment elsewhere would have a detrimental effect on this structure if there were no backfill. And that is exactly what happened later in October, December and January.

The issue remained; more Afghan forces were needed for Kandahar Province and Canada could not get them. In all probability, the collapse of Canadian strategic influence in Kabul played a role in attenuating any Canadian attempts to exert relative power in Afghan Ministry of Defence or Presidential circles (as discussed later). An alternative view suggests that the locus of power in kandak deployment lay in CSTC-A and ISAF HQ and it was British leverage in those forums that was decisive. Canada's inability to get more Afghan army troops for the province was likely the result of some combination of both views.

No matter what view one takes, the situation allowed the British to poach an Afghan kandak that was assisting Canadian forces in securing Kandahar City and sent it repeatedly to Helmand Province to prop up their situation. One could argue that the British reciprocated with the use of the Regional Battle Group (South) companies in Kandahar. However, the crushing need to have Afghan soldiers assist the Afghan police and protect Afghan people was arguably more important than ripping an Afghan kandak out while it was developing relations with the population. In the balance of things, having a couple of British companies arrive for a couple of operations and then depart for another province was not a bargain.

There was other bad news. There was friction between the Afghan army leadership in Kandahar and the new Governor. Governor Raufi continued to behave as he had when he was a major general, a posture the current commander of 205 Corps, Maj.-Gen. Sher Mohammad Zazai, resented. One consequence was the withdrawal of Afghan army representatives from the Operation Coordination Center-Province at the Palace, a move that attenuated security coordination.[74] Overall, fall 2008 was a period of significant transition for all levels of the Afghan security apparatus in the province.

Development: The Provincial Reconstruction Team and TF Kandahar from September–October 2008

The alterations brought in by the new Canadian strategy had consequences for the PRT, which was itself subject to some fluctuation by fall 2008. Simply put, there was a struggle over who would control the PRT: the OGDs or the Army. The arguments for OGD control included the idea that to implement the new imperatives coming from the Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan, more civilians from Ottawa were needed in Afghanistan, and they required a clearer reporting chain back to the Cabinet Committee. The arguments against OGD control lay in that there was no way the military personnel were going to permit military operations (specifically force protection and CIMIC) to be controlled by inexperienced civilians who had no command responsibility. This impasse continued throughout fall 2008 until a new structure could be agreed upon in January 2009. Even then, it was a tenuous relationship.During this time, the PRT relinquished its military legal advisor, who was pulled back by the Judge Advocate General in Ottawa and was not replaced. This ended military involvement in the Afghan rule of law initiatives.[75]

The most significant changes to PRT operations occurred during fall 2008. LCol Woodworth, looking at the Interim Provincial Action Plan and the Kandahar Action Plan, was concerned that there was a lack of coordination in the Zharey and Panjwayi Districts. It was clear that there was going to be increased focus on Kandahar City by the OGDs, especially after Sarposa, and that if institutionalized measures were not taken, reconstruction and development resources would dry up in the districts. This, in turn, would affect the battle groups' ability to Hold. The battle groups could Clear, but needed CIMIC to assist with the Hold after the battle groups moved on. The idea of a "stabilization company" combining a platoon of infantry from force protection company and several CIMIC detachments emerged as a possibility. Its implementation in fall 2008 was hampered by force generation problems, but at least the idea existed.[76]

The other component was the role of the Joint District Coordination Centre. The idea that the Joint District Coordination Centre could be more than a security coordination office also emerged earlier in 2008. LCol Woodworth wanted the OGDs to expand their involvement in the districts through the Joint District Coordination Centres, which would become a sort of "PRT forward." CIDA and DFAIT personnel were, however, limited by Ottawa in deploying "forward," as much as some of them wanted to go out, so CIMIC would have to retain a significant role in project and programme delivery and verification. The idea that a stabilization company and a joint district coordination centre would exist in each contested district to handle all three lines of operations (security, development, governance), and then be able to identify and address sub-district problems, gained traction throughout fall 2008,[77] but it was in the face of substantial opposition from a variety of parties. Some elements did not see how stabilization company/Joint District Coordination Centre operations related to the new Canadian government strategy, and were hung up on a dogmatic interpretation of the benchmarks and priorities. Other elements wanted to "fight the red icons" and steer clear of anything smacking of development. Still others wanted scarce personnel resources allocated to their projects. Woodworth and his staff were unable to implement everything they thought they needed to by winter 2008. In a broad sense, two solitudes emerged by late October: the army focus on the districts, and the OGDs' focus on Kandahar City.[78]

That said, there was significant movement during this time in the ANDS reconstruction and development system, that is, the Provincial Development Committee, District Development Assembly and Community Development Council mechanisms. An increase in civilian staff at the PRT, particularly CIDA staff, coupled with increased focus, assisted with this. At the embassy level, CIDA dropped nearly everything else in the country to deal with Kandahar, with an increase from 17% to 50% of CIDA funding heading south. The most significant change was a reinvigorated Provincial Development Committee. The replacement of Asadullah Khalid with General Raufi, coupled with the efforts of Rhonda Gossen from CIDA (with Andrew Scyner who served in previous PRT rotations providing continuity support), was crucial in this. Sector working groups were also set up, which helped the provincial government link to the national government line ministries like the Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development. The whole system started from scratch: many of Asadullah Khalid's people went with him when he departed and there was no handover at all. In August 2008, the provincial government was starting over again, six years after the defeat of the Taliban in 2002, and three years after the deployment of the first Canadian PRT.[79]

Though the system was less than perfect, Afghans and Canadians were reaping the benefits of three years of hard work. Money was able to flow much more freely from Canada to Kabul to Kandahar (see Figure 4-6). The "sluice gate" at the provincial level now opened under Raufi, and it was clearer to all that the real impediment had been Asadullah Khalid all along. The issue now was the insurgency at the district levels. And, in theory, that is where the planned PRT stabilization companies and the Joint District Coordination Centres came into play working alongside the Canadian and Afghan security forces.

Unfortunately, personality conflicts hampered the development effort at the TF Kandahar level and this was exacerbated by cultural differences between CIDA, DFAIT and the Canadian Army. Culturally, CIDA was used to dealing with "enabling partners" that were usually neutral aid delivery systems. Some CIDA personnel found it difficult to see the Canadian Army units as "enabling partners," others found it impossible due to personal ideological beliefs, and still others even openly expressed contempt for military personnel in what were supposed to be cordial interagency meetings. Some Canadian officers believed that CIDA was behaving like any other non-governmental organization would as opposed to an agency of the Canadian government. They believed that some CIDA personnel were opposed to TF Kandahar district-level operations.[80]

Some CIDA personnel were culturally not attuned to information operations and the measurement of effects. As a result, they came across to military personnel as naive and idealistic. One CIDA representative haughtily asserted that the Afghan National Army should not be involved in delivering humanitarian aid. This was bad. Afghans should not get credit for Canadian aid. BGen Thompson reminded this person that Afghanistan was their country and they could do what they wanted to, and Canada was in support of the Afghans. It was next to impossible for the effects planners to get information from some CIDA representatives, while other younger CIDA personnel learned how the "Army tribe" did business and tried to find ways to build personal and conceptual bridges. Some CIDA development planning using non-Canadian Army implementing partners failed to pan out, which meant that the CIDA representatives had to finally ask TF Kandahar for help, which they viewed as humiliating. TF Kandahar was only too happy to assist.[81]

New Initiatives from Kabul

The ongoing issues relating to the Afghan police forces, the judicial system, and their relationship to rule of law at the lowest level of government prompted Commander ISAF General David McKiernan to take the lead in order to overhaul and systematize a coherent approach. McKiernan understood that the top-down approach favoured by the Bonn Agreement nations and their pillars back in 2002 was not working. Throughout 2008,

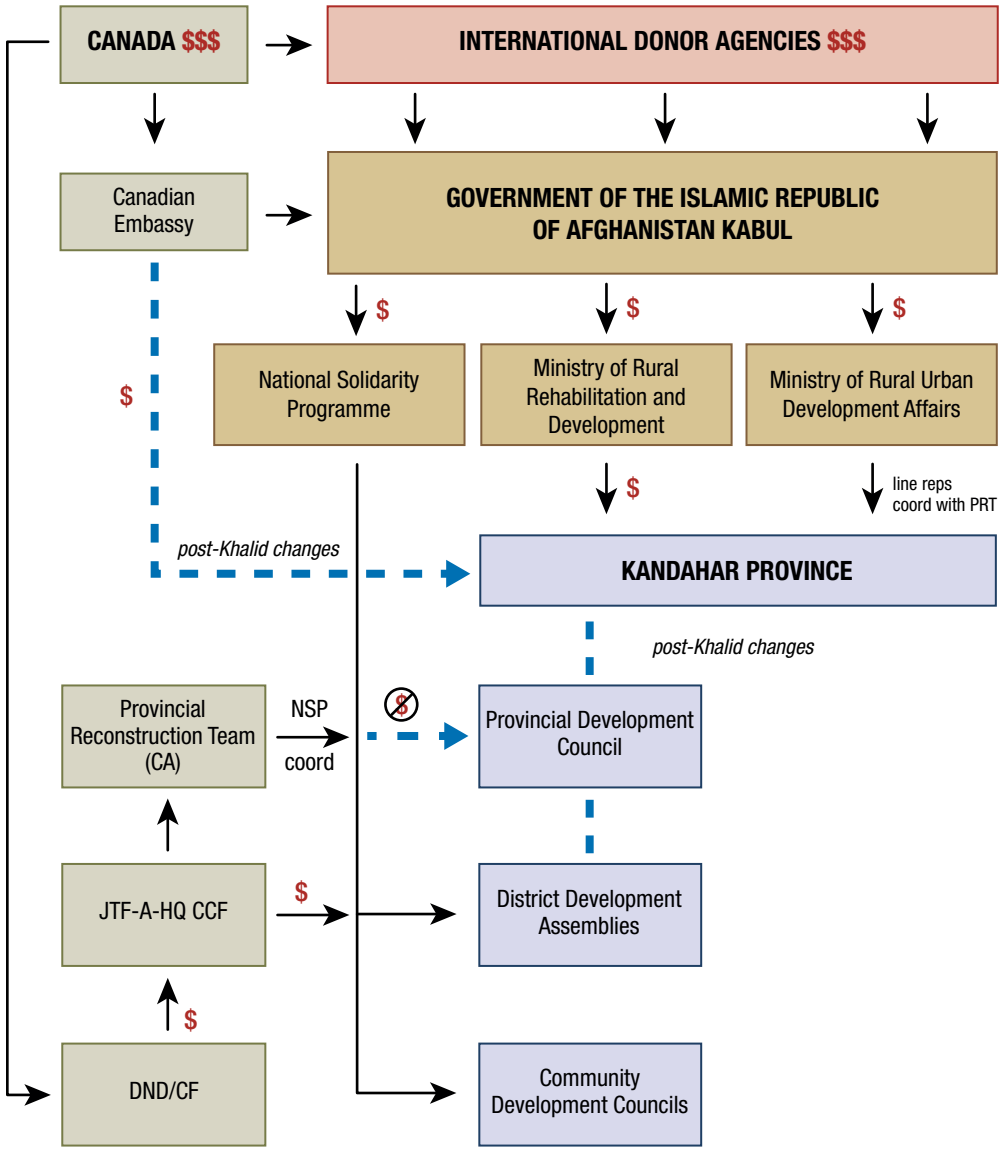


Figure 4-6: Development Monies Flow, Kandahar Province, 2007-2009. *Based on a PRT briefing to the author, Kandahar, February 2009

Commander ISAF worked with the Afghan government, Ministry of the Interior, CSTC-A, UNAMA, and a variety of donor nations, including Canada. Out of these discussions came a series of programmes that had an impact on Canadian operations in Kandahar.

Building on the existing ANCOP and the Focused District Development programmes designed to professionalize the police at the district level, there was recognition that policing needed the backing of good governance and that they really needed to proceed together. The Karzai government created the Independent Directorate for Local Governance: its purpose was to keep an eye on provincial governors and the relationship between them, and the district leaders they appointed. In 2008, the Independent Directorate for Local Governance implemented the Afghan Social Outreach Programme, which was supposed to work with local communities within the context of the district-level governance to handle dispute resolution by combining local practices with those of the Afghan government. As we have seen, the development assemblies and development councils that were already in place handled development issues but did not address justice or dispute resolution. The Afghan Social Outreach Programme was to operate as a counterpart to the District Development Assemblies and Community Development Councils.[82]

In an ideal situation, then, the ANCOP would come into a district, the district police would be whisked away for training as part of Focused District Development. Then, the Independent Directorate for Local Governance's implementing partners would come in, establish the community and district councils, and work with the Governor and the district leader to make sure those linkages were working. The Afghan Social Outreach Programme funding would also be channeled to provide expanded police training programmes; to "re- align [police] salaries and benefits with [army] levels as a means to fight corruption and desertion; strengthen [police] integration into local institutions…."[83]

Another initiative was the Afghan Public Protection Programme or AP3. This programme sought to establish community militias trained by U.S. Special Forces but administered by district police after they were *FDD*'d (Focused District Development became a verb and an adverb.) The Afghan Public Protection Programme was extremely controversial and its implementation problematic. As we have seen, the disarmament programmes established back in 2003, and their successor, the Disbandment of Illegally Armed Groups programme, were designed to take AK-47s off the streets and to reduce the coercive power of tribal and ethnic militias. Some saw the Afghan Public Protection Programme as a reversal of years of work based on a Vietnam model applied to Iraq that did not necessarily apply to Afghanistan and opposed its implementation. Others argued that the programme was historically based in the arbaki (the tribal police) and that having a community protection force allowed local people to stand up for themselves against the

insurgents. Variants of the programme were used to placate the critics and Afghan Public Protection Programme was finally rolled out and tested in Wardak. It would later come to Kandahar but not for some time.[84]

McKiernan deserved credit for working to deal with the crippling security problems confronted by the government and its allies at the grassroots level. It remained to be seen if Afghan police units and local communities in Kandahar would benefit from these programmes.

Governance and Legitimacy

There was a growing threat to the Canadian effort and his name was Ahmad Wali Karzai. It was well known by both TF Kandahar and the population in general that he was the key Popalzai power broker and worked alongside former governor Asadullah Khalid to maintain Popalzai dominance behind the scenes. Issues involving the elected leader of the provincial council were, as we have seen, not new. These problems were about to be exacerbated, which, in turn, had a long-term effect on Canadian and ISAF operations.

In mid-2008, the Bush administration, for a variety of reasons, shifted policy focus away from Iraq and back toward Afghanistan. With this shift, the possibility of an Iraq-style "surge" gained momentum. Preparatory measures for a possible influx of American troops included the allocation of $1 billion by the U.S. government to southern Afghanistan to build infrastructure for the potentially incoming forces. Ahmad Wali Karzai wanted to co-opt the construction companies in Kandahar and lead a consortium to absorb as much of this money as possible.[85] The Canadian concept of conflict of interest clearly did not apply under such circumstances, and it was likely that the bulk of this consortium would be companies owned by cronies connected to Ahmad Wali Karzai.

The idea of an Ahmad Wali Karzai and thus Popalzai-led monopoly on a billion dollars' worth of business was too terrible to contemplate for some in TF Kandahar. First, it would enhance the growing belief system that only the Popalzais were benefiting from these projects, which, in turn, would augment existing tribal grievances that could be exploited by the Taliban and other entities. Second, such a monopoly would gobble up the limited existing construction and security capacity in Kandahar Province, which, in turn, would reduce the ability of the PRT to accomplish its development aims. Third, it could overwhelm and distort the mechanisms that the PRT was working on, like the Provincial Development Committee.

LCol Woodworth was particularly concerned about Ahmad Wali Karzai's increased emergence as an overtly malevolent power broker. This occurred after the removal of Asadullah Khalid in August 2008, and the PRT took note of AWK's linkages to the new regional police leadership as well as his relationship to other extracurricular activities.

Col Jamie Cade at TF Kandahar likened the situation to *The Sopranos*, a popular television programme of the day dealing with organized crime in New Jersey. There was no consensus on what to do about it and no well thought-out strategic guidance from the embassy or Ottawa.[86]

Asadullah Khalid's replacement was, at first glance, formidable. General Rahmatullah Raufi commanded 205 Corps back in 2006 and had close working relationships with previous Canadian commanders. He was also a religious man who understood the crucial role of the Kandahar Ulema Shura, an organization completely marginalized by Asadullah Khalid.[87] One of his first moves, as we have seen, was to sort out the Provincial Development Committee. PRT personnel looked forward to a mutually beneficial relationship with Raufi. It was unclear at the time, however, if this man of some principle would be able to stand up to Ahmad Wali Karzai or be able to deal with the Kandahari power structure and reverse the erosion of government legitimacy with a billion U.S. dollars on the line. LCol Woodworth noted at the time that "the social contract in Kandahar Province was in ruins and it had to be rebuilt."[88]

The PRT continued to send out CIMIC patrols to the various districts as before, with the priority on Zharey, Panjwayi, Dand and Arghandab. CIMIC had an outstation with 2-2 Infantry at FOB Hutal in Maywand, though this detachment lacked transport. A CIMIC presence was retained in Spin Boldak after Recce Squadron departed in September. For the most part, that team kept its ears to the ground on what the Joint District Coordination Centre was up to and reported the details of the continuing attempts to kill Col Abdul Raziq with suicide bombers. They were also in a position to summon medical evacuation assistance when a UNAMA vehicle from the World Health Organization was suicide-bombed, killing one and wounding 15 people.[89]

The PRT also increased its observation of Daman district in fall 2008. This occurred for two reasons. First, Daman was "connective tissue" between Kandahar City and KAF. The increased emphasis on Kandahar City led to scrutiny of Daman. Second, there was an increase in enemy activity on Highway 4 and there were more rocket attacks on KAF than usual. There was even a kidnap attempt against Demining Agency for Afghanistan workers.[90] Attempts had been made in 2007 to link up CIMIC with the RAF Regiment squadron, who were protecting the airfield, but the lack of PRT resources at the time limited LCol Bob Chamberlain's ability to have an effect in Daman.[91]

When CIMIC got into Daman and made contact with the district leader and police, they found that the district was quiet and stable. The National Directorate of Security kept a close eye on known Taliban-sympathetic communities where the main insurgent weapon was the night letter and other forms of low-level intimidation. The National Directorate of Security knew who the shadow Taliban district leader was and where he lived in Quetta.

The police conducted raids and killed Taliban in small numbers. They were less concerned with rule of law initiatives emanating from Kandahar City and killed any insurgent they found to be a repeat offender. There was also a functioning District Development Assembly.[92]

The one destabilizing factor, CIMIC learned, was not the Taliban. It was Ahmad Wali Karzai. Elders from three villages "claimed Ahmad Wali Karzai had threatened the people of Nakline and warned them to vacate the village because the land allegedly belongs to the government. They had been living on that land for ten years and do not want to leave. [One elder] claimed that Karzai wanted to vacate the land so he could sell it for personal gain."[93] Daman, as it turned out, was mostly Popalzai, with Alikozai in the minority. Daman Shura members told CIMIC that Ahmad Wali Karzai was moving Popalzai people onto Alikozai land. The Alikozais then boycotted the Daman shura in protest. They made protestations to Haji Agha Lalai Dastagiri and Karimullah, the two remaining Alikozai power brokers, but to no effect: "members of the Popalzais are better represented in the government and have connections to ISAF and the Taliban…[Haji Agha Lalai Dastagiri] is a subordinate to Ahmad Wali Karzai and fears losing his position."[94]

The Taliban used situations like the one in Daman as leverage to exploit the decreasing legitimacy of the government. Word traveled fast in Kandahar Province, too fast for Canadian information operations to respond. In this case, it was impossible. ISAF, and thus Canada, was seen increasingly to be part of the problem because of the relationship to Ahmad Wali Karzai—whether he was elected or not. Though the new Canadian strategy made broad statements about rule of law, improving core governance capacity delivery and so on, specific obstacles like Ahmad Wali Karzai seemingly did not exist in that theoretical framework. If Canada was supporting the Afghan government, and Ahmad Wali Karzai was part of that government, was Canada supporting his illicit activities? That was the logic that was bandied about in the tea houses and bazaars around the provincial districts and the city.[95] Canadian information operations did not counter this message in any significant or systematic way.

Ending Operations in Ghorak District

Ghorak District operations, considered an irritant by successive TF Kandahar headquarters, were finally shut down during this rotation. The catalytic event was an insurgent mortar attack on the district centre on 3–4 October. At this time, the Afghan police manned the facility. Requests through the OCC-P to Regional Command (South) for recce platform assistance and an aerial show of force were denied. TF Eagle Assault refused to fly a medical evacuation mission because of the Ghorak forces' inability to convince Eagle Assault that there were competent ground forces available to control a landing zone. An Afghan military Mi-17 helicopter conducted the medical evacuation

but, when the "wounded" were brought to the Role 3 hospital, they turned out to be the relatives of the district chief of police. After two more days of reported mortaring, TF Kandahar directed 2-2 Infantry to deploy an infantry company to the district centre (Operation SUK JANUBI). TF Eagle Assault's CH-47s airlifted the company there in two lifts. They found five wounded police but the situation was by no means as dire as had been reported. LTC Hurlbut and his staff were somewhat annoyed: "Once on the ground the situation proved not to be as tenuous as the Ghorak District leader made it sound. In fact according to the Afghan National Police on the ground the last contact they had with the insurgents was six days ago." Further key leadership engagements confirmed this.[96]

The assessment of TF Kandahar was that the situation in Ghorak was all about narcotics. The police were there to protect a drug route that competed with somebody else's drug route. Those competitors were connected to the Taliban, so there was a convergence of interests in removing "police" control in the area. TF Kandahar finally told the Afghans that they would no longer support resupply of the Ghorak District Centre and, since they demonstrated that they could mount a medical evacuation with their own helicopters, they could handle the situation themselves. The Ministry of Defence wanted nothing to do with Ghorak, either; Bismillah Khan, the defence minister, did not want his machines used for this purpose. There was substantial pressure brought to bear on Regional Command (South), 205 Corps and TF Kandahar by Hamid Karzai personally, but everybody stood firm. The compromise solution was that 205 Corps would transport police rotations in by Mi-17, but everybody else would stay out of it. This took place at the end of November and was a successful demonstration of Afghan initiative and planning.[97]

The effort was, in the end, unsustainable. In mid-January 2009, reports came into the provincial coordination centre that the district centre was abandoned and the police had deserted. The district leader and district police chief were spotted in Kandahar spending the policemen's pay. The Governor, when confronted with this, said he did not blame the police for deserting, because they had not been paid. The provincial coordination centre staff concluded that the Governor "does not appear to be confident enough to make representations to Kabul and address the squabbling."[98]

On 13 January, the insurgents moved in and took over. They "congratulated each other over the fall of the district centre and confirmed that vehicles, weapons, and ammunition had been left behind." When remonstrations were made to Brig.-Gen. Matiullah, he refused to send any more police unless there was a permanent Afghan National Army presence in Ghorak. It was finally game over for Canadian involvement in that district.

The OMLT and Helmand Operations, October 2008

The Canadian OMLT mentors and their counterparts became part of two large-scale operations in Helmand Province conducted in late 2008 by virtue of the fact that 2nd Kandak, 1-205 Brigade was now a "strike" kandak and thus deployable. From August to October, the insurgents in Helmand slowly built up and then seized three communities west of the capital, Lashkar Gah. Between 8 and 10 October, they launched a combination of indirect fire and suicide bomb attacks in the city. On 11 October, British AH-64 Apache attack helicopters disrupted a ground assault on the outskirts of the city, while insurgent mortars rained down on the provincial palace. This attack occurred during the British relief in place and was directed against unacclimatized troops. TF Helmand believed that the bulk of the police forces were infiltrated and compromised, and it appeared to them that the provincial capital might be lost.[99]

The Lashkar Gah situation escalated into a national crisis and prompted the mobilization and redeployment of 2nd (Strike) Kandak on 14 October. At 1800 hours, lead Canadian mentor, Maj Steve Nolan, was instructed by Col Joe Shipley to be in Helmand by 0600 hours the next morning. The 36-man OMLT team was forced to deploy with six RG-31 vehicles, unreliable communications and no logistics support plan. The Afghans mounted up in their "technical" Ford Rangers, Hummers and 10-tonne International Trucks, and moved west along Highway 1. (See Figures 4-7 to 4-9.)

Units were converging on Lashkar Gah with no coordination, including three kandaks from Kabul. 2nd (Strike) Kandak was ordered into the city with no intelligence on what was going on. The RG-31s cruised around trying to determine where the enemy were as civilians rushed about trying to escape. The team moved from British organization to British organization trying to find out where they fit in and were passed on until they found General Mohajum from 3-205 Corps. His staff was working up a plan to push the enemy back, sweep the green belt west of the city and then south to Garmsir and Nawa, the site of TF Orion's battles in 2006.

Operation BIA ITNAMAAN (also called ATAL-28) had 2nd (Strike) Kandak as the centre battalion in a three-battalion abreast sweep south. The terrain was complex: it consisted of an incredible number of water-filled ditches, irrigation canals of varying sizes, and bridges and culverts throughout. Compound complexes clustered together to act as impromptu mini-forts. The "Tower of Babel" of coalition communications systems complicated the whole situation: American military mentors, British military mentors, American police mentors, Afghan police of various types, and so on, all had different radios. This did not bode well to the Canadian mentors.

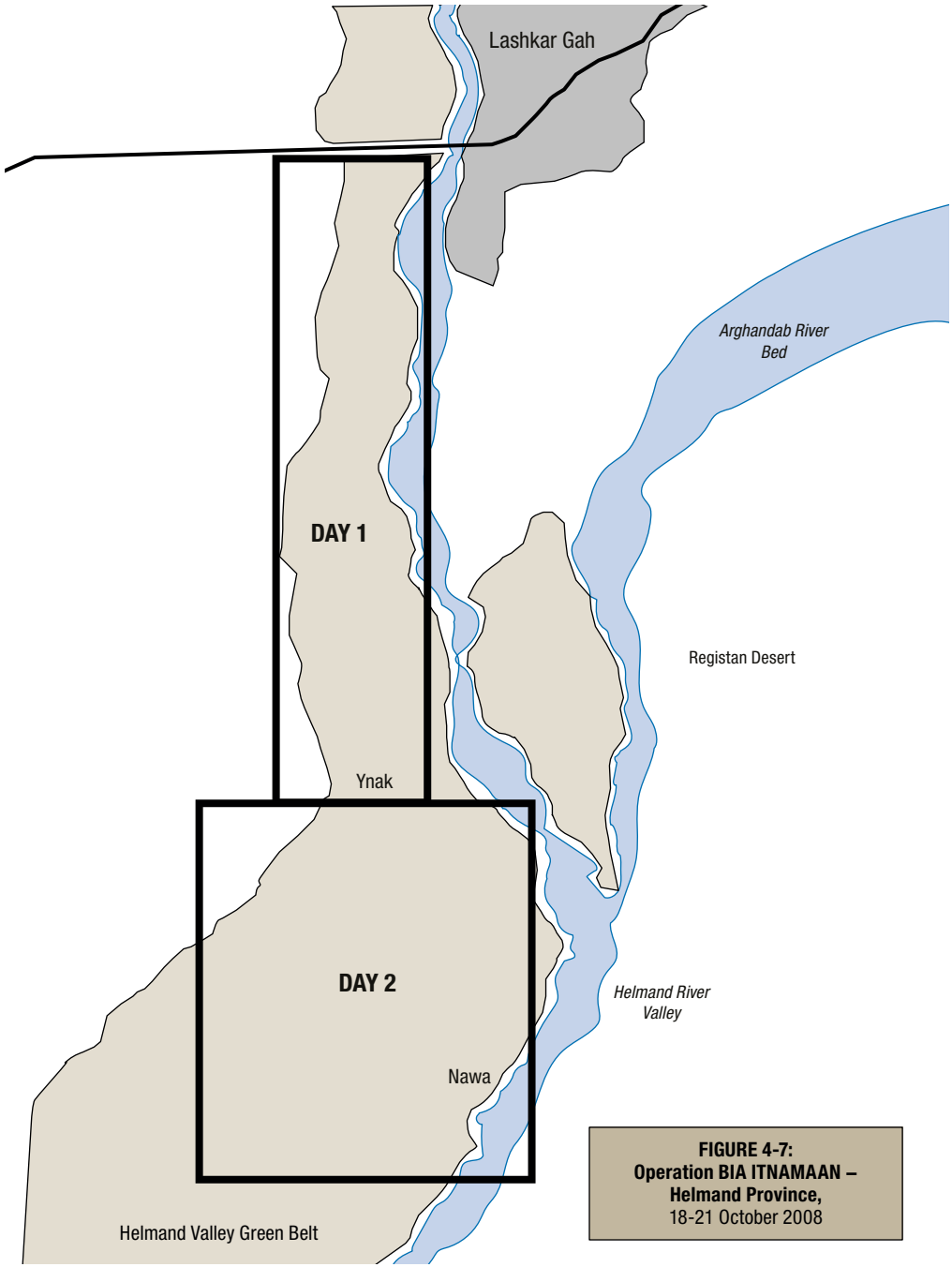


FIGURE 4-7:
Operation BIA ITNAMAAN – Helmand Province,
18-21 October 2008

Figure 4-7: Operation BIA ITNAMAAN – Helmand Province, 18-21 October 2008

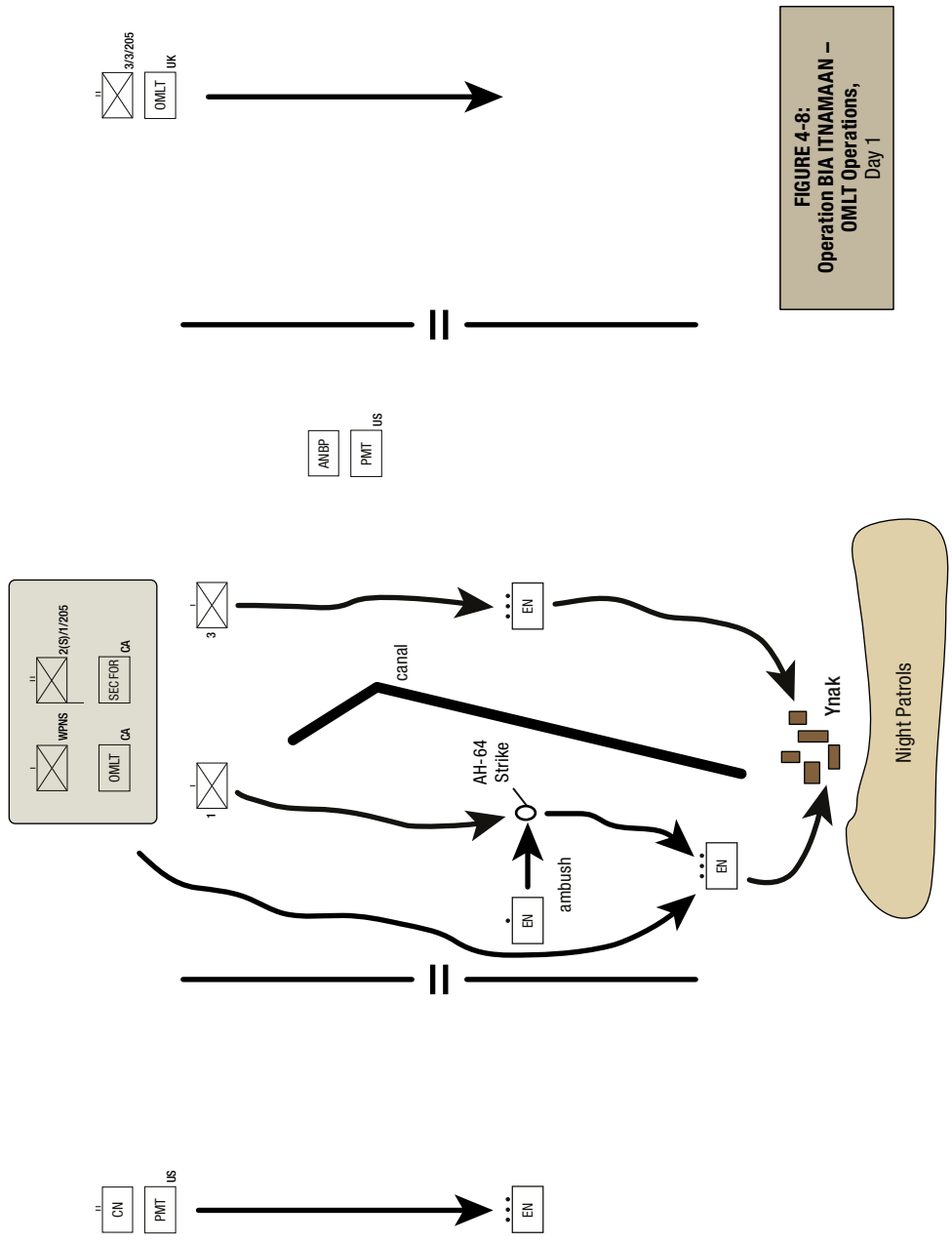


Figure 4-8: Operation BIA ITNAMAAN – OMLT Operations, Day 1

FIGURE 4-9:
Operation BIA ITNAMAAN –
OMLT Operations,
Day 2

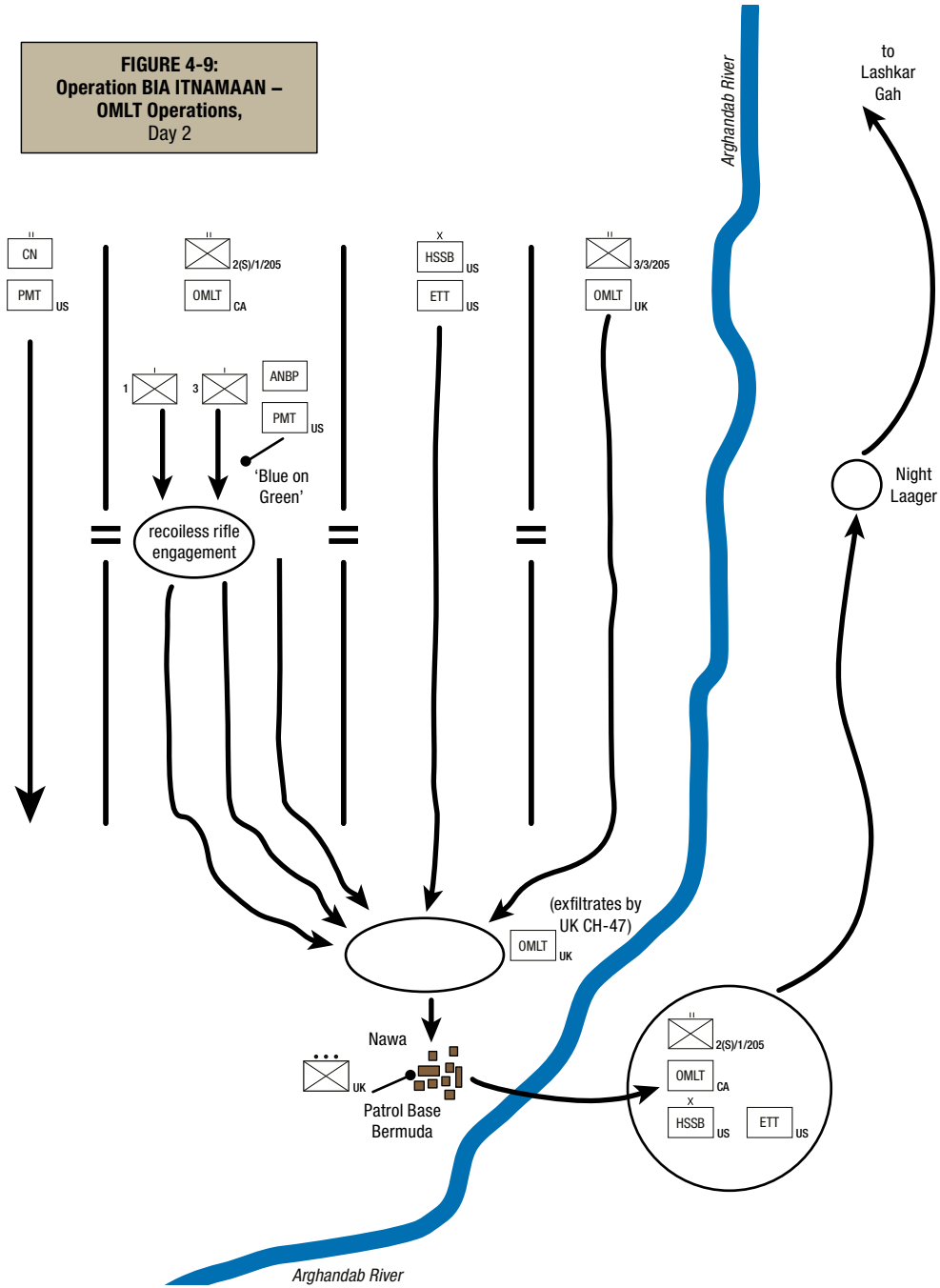


Figure 4-9: Operation BIA ITNAMAAN – OMLT Operations, Day 2

On 19 October, the Canadians and Afghans crossed the start line around 0500. The flanking battalions, a counternarcotics kandak and an Afghan border police kandak, started taking casualties and halted. A pair of A-10 Warthogs and a pair of AH-64 Apaches arrived on scene, but British communications broke down. The Canadian OMLT was able to communicate with the aircraft and the aerial firepower was brought to bear. 1st Company and its Canadians were then ambushed from an orchard and this turned into a massive firefight, killing at least 20 enemy. The insurgents had a covering force that initiated a delay, and took casualties while IE emplacers and small ambush teams dispersed into the small communities. 2nd (Strike) Kandak advanced, encountered, and defeated a slew of these ambush teams throughout the first day. While moving forward later on, they encountered an enemy strong point, dug in with overhead cover and about to be occupied with SPG-9 recoilless rifles. After another firefight, which took out the systems, the kandak continued on to the town of Ynak, where they leaguered and sent out night patrols. Adjacent Afghan units opened up on anything that moved with spec fire, so 2nd (Kandak) and their mentors had to be careful. When Maj Nolan was briefed back in Lashkar Gah, he learned that 2nd (Strike) Kandak and the mentors inflicted an estimated 60+ dead and over 100 wounded on the enemy force.

The plan changed for the next day. The nature of the terrain accommodated the inclusion of a fourth axis of advance from Ynak to Nawa, but now BIA ITNAMAAN commanders thought they could make a 25-kilometre thrust to their objectives. This after a hard day's fight over 5 kilometres. Now, however, there were the equivalent of six battalions in the line, which made Operation BIA ITNAMAAN the largest Afghan, let alone, coalition operation conducted thus far in southern Afghanistan.

The morning of 20 October was characterized by a series of discrete encounters with small numbers of insurgents who fired off whatever weapons they had and tried to melt away. By 1300 hours, however, the kandak encountered a defensive line that employed airburst RPG rounds and PKM machine-gun fire in an attempt to break up the Afghan–Canadian attack. This inflicted some casualties on 2nd (Strike) Kandak. When that failed to deter the advance, the insurgents dispersed under fire, taking casualties throughout. The heat and lack of water soon forced the Afghans and Canadians to halt around 1500 hours and replenish using water purification systems from wells and canals. Intelligence estimates came down that 2nd (Strike) Kandak took on a 150-man enemy force, but it was unclear what the battle damage assessment was.

Photo Credit: Author

Photo Credit: Author

OMLT operations took Canadian troops to Helmand Province alongside 2nd (Strike) Kandak on two occasions to prop up government and British forces there.

The coalition forces reached Nawa. The problem was that the enemy emerged behind the columns and laid IEDs on the roads, probably all the way back to Lashkar Gah. As the Canadian team froze in a destroyed building at the poorly named Patrol Base Bermuda in Nawa, plans were drawn up to cross over into the Reg Desert and head up the east bank of the Arghandab River up to Lashkar Gah. The forces launched the next day but became bogged down in the desert, forcing a night leaguer. Maj Nolan, his men and 2nd (Strike) Kandak made it to the provincial capital, where they were feted before a rendezvous with a Canadian convoy sent out to resupply them and then return to Kandahar.

Operation BIA ITNAMAAN was instrumental in saving the provincial capital in Helmand, and led the way in demonstrating that the Afghan National Army had significantly progressed since the days of 2006 when Afghan army platoons were attached to Canadian infantry companies. The role of the OMLT in this progression was profound and BIA ITNAMAAN was an example of what could be done when it had to be done.

Zharey District Operations, October 2008

The pattern of activity in Zharey resembled that of the previous month. Strong Point Lakokhel was in contact for 14 days in October, with multiple contacts on some days. For the most part, it was constant "shoot and scoot," with Canadian artillery fire as a response. During one encounter, a Canadian–Afghan patrol from Lakokhel came under fire and withdrew back to the strong point. A Canadian LAV III crew started to provide cover fire when the 25mm cannon jammed. The crew commander, MCpl David Tedford, used the pintle-mounted machine gun while the gunner tried to clear the jam. When he was unable to do so, Tedford exited the turret to fix the cannon while under fire. Clearing the jam, the LAV III was able to provide suppressive fire while artillery was called in. The joint patrol made it back in. MCpl Tedford received the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.

Enemy pressure was increasingly applied to Strong Point Howz-e Madad as the month went on (eight contacts), while Spin Pir was hit twice. The Highway 1 length between Spin Pir and Patrol Base Wilson attracted three IEDs and a number of ambushes, likely led by insurgent commanders Mullahim Sahib and Mullah Zergay, who had significant local experience in the area. The JANGISIOUX patrols into Pashmul encountered the enemy at least four times. Rockets continued to be fired at Ma'Sum Ghar, and the tanks continued to fire back at the points of origin identified by the HALO and other systems. Pashmul South was probed twice that month and there was a single ambush on Route Summit. (See Figures 4-10a and 4-10b.)

The biggest change noted by the TF Kandahar J2 was the significantly increased enemy presence in Asheque, which they believed was "in part facilitated by the assassination of Habibullah Jan." Importantly, "the insurgent commander currently assessed to be responsible

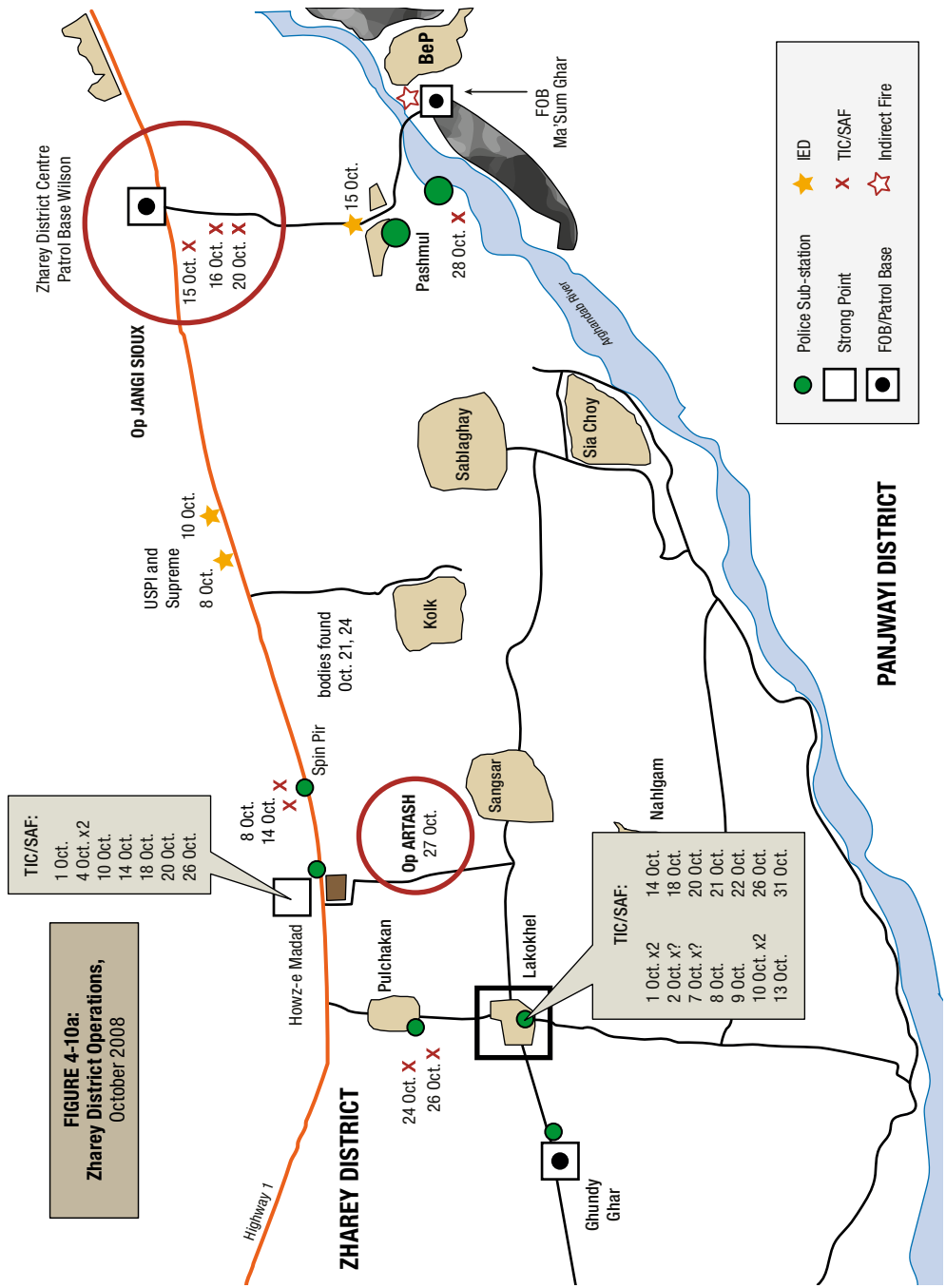


Figure 4-10a: Zharey District Operations, October 2008

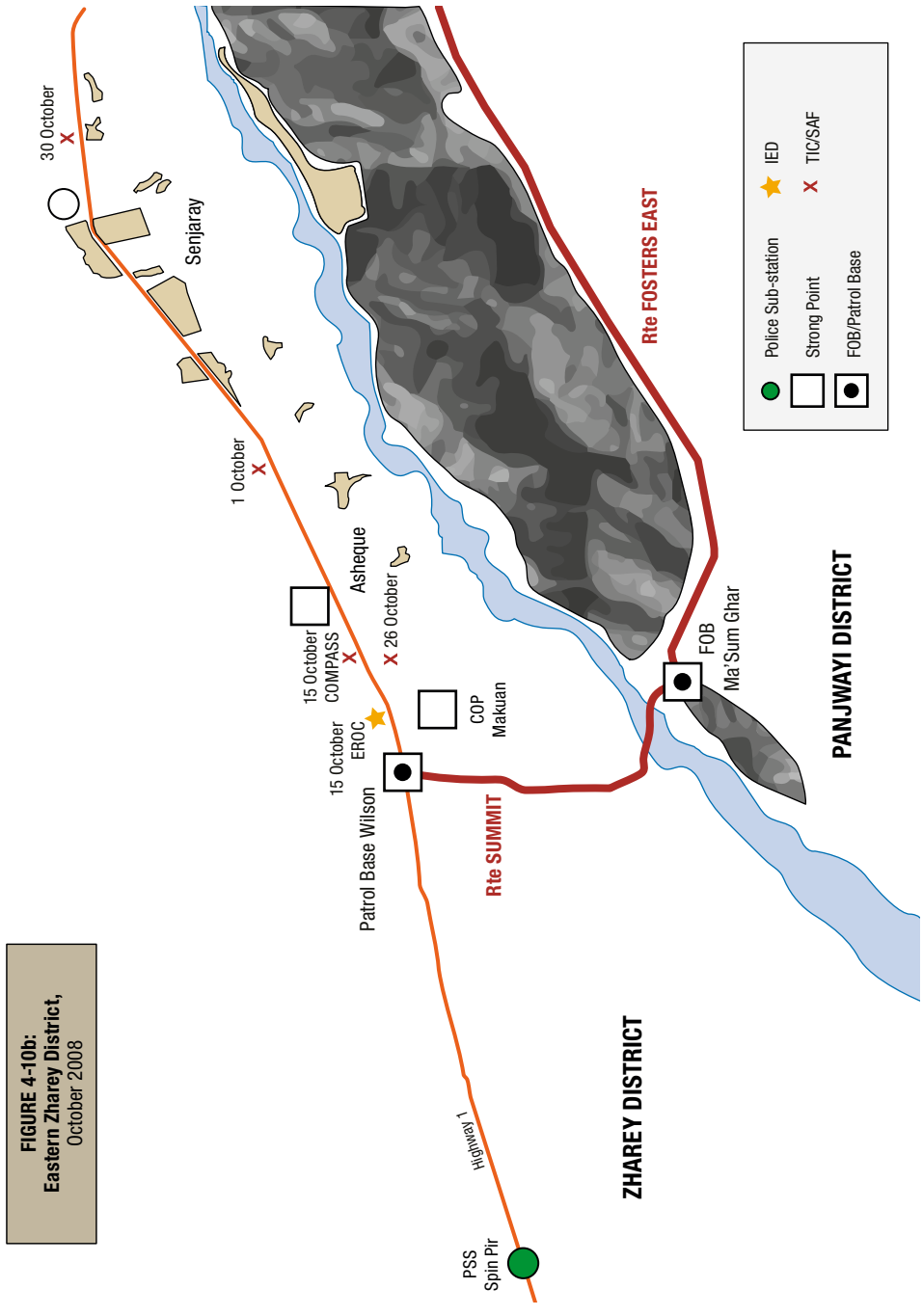


FIGURE 4-10b:
Eastern Zharey District,
October 2008

Figure 4-10b: Eastern Zharey District, October 2008

for Senjaray is Haji Abdullah, the older brother of Habibullah Jan."[100] Not all of the locals were going along with the programme, and they killed insurgent Commander Nasrullah as he hectored the population one night. The enemy deployed a team to deal with the local elders in mid-October in preparation for "the eventual occupation" of Senjaray.[101] The school was closed and then vandalized, and intimidation against the people spiked. The Zharey police generally were hesitant to go south of Highway 1 into the communities.[102]

There was not a lot happening on the development front in Zharey District. When CIMIC teams engaged the local population, they were told that "ISAF comes out to talk but do nothing."[103] CIMIC reported that Pasab, a bastion of pro-government support in the past, was shifting to support the Taliban because of petty theft by the Afghan police.[104] Indeed, locals in various communities referred to the police as "the addicted" and shunned contact with them more and more.[105] The Zharey police force was desperately in need of Focused District Development. This commenced, thankfully, on 8 October when 40 Zharey police boarded buses for Regional Training Center Herat.[106]

In time, CIMIC, DFAIT and CIDA representatives met with Mr. Sahardi, the district leader, to work out the terms for wheat seed distribution.[107] There was progress by CMT-2 on the Haji Baran canal, with 40 metres completed out of a planned 1,350 metres. However, CIMIC learned that virtually none of the workers were local people and many came from other provinces.[108]

LCol Barrett decided to launch an operation southeast of Howz-e Madad and south of the Spin Pir area, with the intent of seizing and exploiting an IED facilitator's compound to reduce IED use on Highway 1. The Operation ARTASH [Juggernaut] plan involved N Company with an Afghan army company and mentors; the National Directorate of Security; plus a LAV III platoon from M Company, Recce Platoon, and a Leopard platoon from A Squadron. M Company would move south from Spin Pir, seize a series of compounds and open up the road, while N Company and the Afghans would deploy from Howz-e Madad, sweep in from the west, and search a second set of compounds.[109]

Operation ARTASH went in on the morning of 27 October. There was some "shoot and scoot" against N Company consisting of a volley of RPG rounds and some small-arms fire. A bunker with a cache was uncovered and a pair of orbiting OH-58D Warriors engaged a fleeting ground target. Operation ARTASH accomplished little beyond that and the forces returned to their base locations by the late afternoon. The use of the battle group against a singular target with almost no results was a questionable use of resources.[110] The situation in Zharey, for the most part, remained stalemated in October. Some TF Kandahar planners referred to the district as "The Coliseum."

Photo Credit: Author

Photo Credit: Author

Strong Point Lakokhel, with its Canadian and Afghan occupants, was under fire for 23 days in a row throughout September 2008, followed by another 14 days in October.

Panjwayi District Operations, October 2008

Much the same could be said for Panjwayi District. The pattern of activity in October included an enemy probe against Strong Point Mushan, six days of mortaring directed at Strong Point Zangabad preceded by a prolonged TIC on 3 October, and another brief "shoot and scoot" at COP Haji. These incidents were interspersed with a number of IED attacks on Fosters East. The events of 3 October in the vicinity of COP Haji started off with a dismounted platoon-sized patrol that was engaged with small arms. An orbiting B-1B dropped a GBU-32 bomb, which temporarily disrupted the ambush. Then an enemy mortar started up. That was destroyed with an MQ-1 Predator dropping a Hellfire, killing five enemy. Watching with an unblinking eye, the Predator observed insurgents recovering the bodies and weapons, and tracked them to a cemetery, where they met what appeared to be a commander in a white sport utility vehicle. As they had no visible weapons present, they could not be engaged. TF Kandahar concluded that "This attack demonstrates tactical coordination and would have required low-level leadership in the area. This event furthers the assessment that there is essentially a forward line of enemy troops, at least in Panjwayi, in the vicinity of the 28-29 easting."[111]

Strong Point Mushan, however, was still a going concern. The population was more and more receptive to the Afghan army presence and provided more and more information to the Afghans and Canadians operating in the area. The body of a murdered 25-year-old interpreter was discovered by a patrol: the local population explained that there was an insurgent prison somewhere near Mushan, where an Afghan army soldier had been incarcerated and then hanged sometime in September.[112]

This incident, coupled with reports of an insurgent court operating in the Zangabad area, was cause for concern in that the insurgency was establishing a parallel governance system in an area that they believed they controlled. Reports of these and other competitive governance efforts sporadically made their way into TF Kandahar reportage but TF Kandahar did not recognize their significance at the time. It was one thing for the enemy to challenge the government using violence: it was quite another when they moved to the next step of a revolutionary programme.

Maj Cayle Oberwarth's M Company initiated a patrolling schedule in Stability Box Sperwan to maintain security but were engaged on 4 October by an enemy ambush party. Mortars from Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar, an MQ-9 Reaper and a B-1B bomber loaded with GBU-38 bombs killed five enemy in response.[113]

To give Stability Box Sperwan more space, M Company deployed west of Sperwan Ghar in company strength with an Afghan army platoon on 19–20 October. Operation SIKHAL was a sweep into the Zangabad area but it turned up nothing and there was no contact other than a single mortar round flung at the force: "It was determined in conversation with local nationals that the villagers were aware of the ISAF operation 48 hours before our arrival."[114]

On the development front, CMT-1 continued to work on the road and liaised with Blue Hackle, the new private security contractor based out of FOB Zettelmeyer supporting the coalition effort. Blue Hackle brought in its security people and CMT-1 prepared to ramp up paving along Fosters West. Beyond CMT-1 operations, little development was reported in Panjwayi.

Over in Panjwayi East, Canadian police mentors near Salehan kept encountering a militia that, apparently, consisted of a number of ex-policemen from Ghorak. When queried, police chief Bismillah Jan told the Canadians that this was "a group of villagers that rise up against the insurgents when needed."[115] The police mentors reported that more and more people were calling the Joint District Coordination Centre and reporting IED placement: this was an important and positive indicator.[116]

Operation ARAY, 5–10 October 2008

The main coalition event in Panjwayi during the course of October was Operation ARAY [Sickle] (see Figure 4-11). An earlier deployment of L Company 42 Commando Royal Marines into the southwestern districts of Kandahar City led to confirmatory information that a resupply corridor came into the city from Route Lake Effect in Panjwayi District.[117] This, of course, was not new: the Canadian PRT learned about this ratline from CTF Bayonet back in 2005. The focus on operations in Zharey and Panjwayi West over the past year, however, permitted the enemy some respite in Panjwayi East, despite the exhortations of Haji Baran to security forces regarding the security situation. Operation ARAY, which involved both the battle group and the Regional Battle Group (South), was designed to disrupt this enemy activity and to remind the insurgents that Nakhonay was not a safe haven for them.

The operating area was broken down into Objectives DARTMOOR (Salavat); PAARDEBERG (Nakhonay); WOODBURY (Zalakhan) and TARZAN (Belanday). The Canadian sub-units consisted of Recce Squadron with two recce troops, a recce platoon and two engineer troops, and a combat team with two tank troops, two infantry platoons and an Afghan infantry company with Canadian mentors. Canadian CIMIC, PSYOPS and intelligence support was attached to the three British marine companies, who also had an Afghan platoon and several National Directorate of Security agents to conduct sensitive site exploitation. The scheme of manoeuvre had the Canadian recce squadron screen west of Salavat, with the N Company combat team coming into the Nakhonay area from the southwest. Two British platoons would go into Salavat, while a marine company disrupted to the east. The third British company would initially screen to the east, move into the Belanday area, link up, and then both companies would go into Salavat from the east.[118]

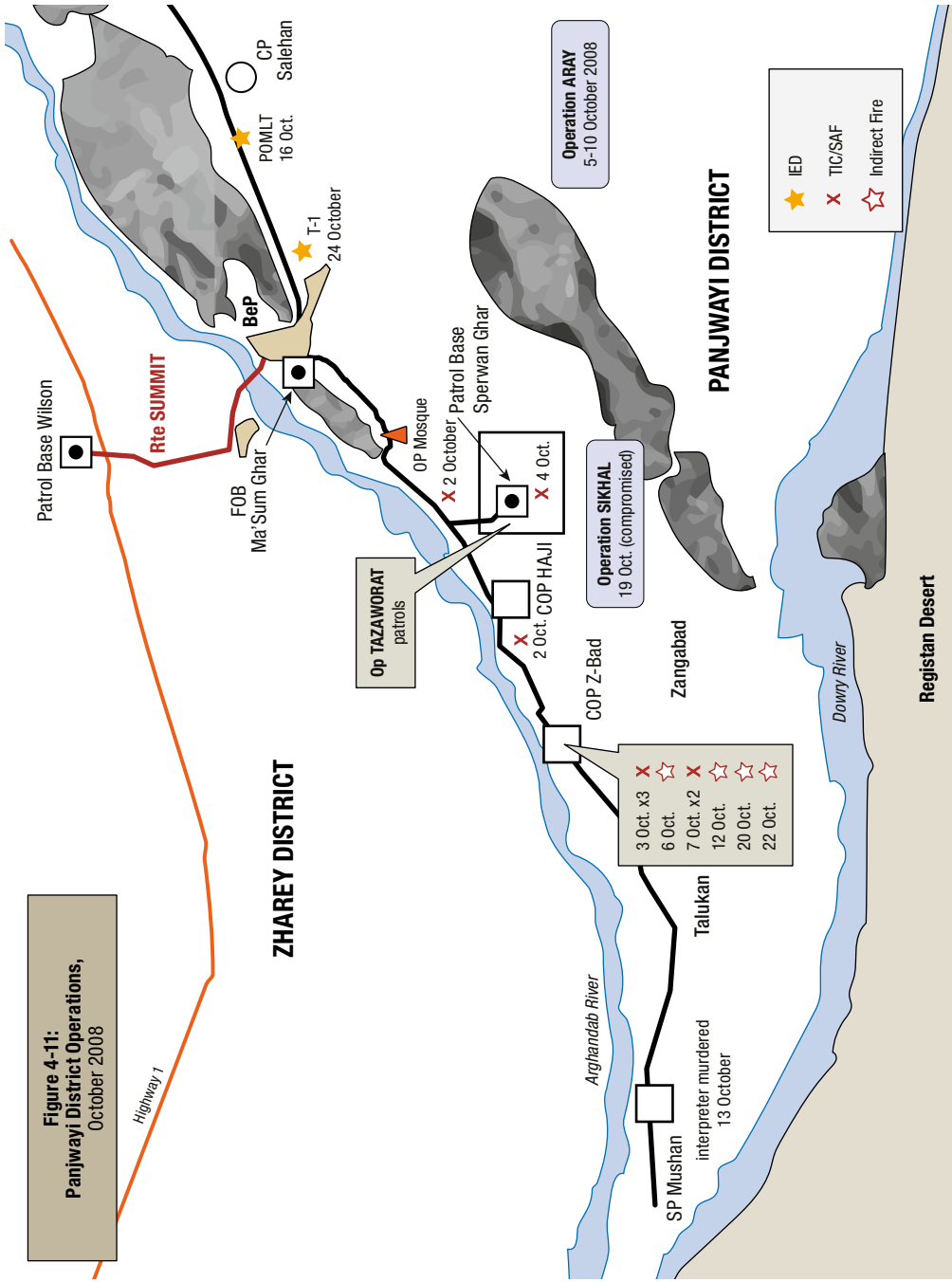


Figure 4-11: Panjwayi District Operations, October 2008

Photo Credit: DND AR2008-K124-117

Photo Credit: DND AR2008-K128-019

Operation ARAY, conducted in eastern Panjwayi District, netted substantial arms caches in Salavat and Nakhonay. These included factory-made plastic anti-personnel mines and rocket-propelled grenade rounds, which combat engineers (previous page) prepare for demolition.

On the first day, 5 October, K Company took some small-arms fire in a "shoot and scoot" but L Company ran into an IED-initiated ambush, which they shot their way out of with the help of an AH-64 Apache attack helicopter. There were four wounded that required medical evacuation. N Company was plagued with vehicle breakdowns as it manoeuvred to get to the start line.[119] The enemy's early warning system activated within one minute of the Canadian forces departing FOB Ma'Sum Ghar and Patrol Base Wilson: flares and white flags were seen, and these were correlated with Canadian movements. The insurgent network in Khenjakak, southwest of Nakhonay, requested reinforcements, a disturbing development since N Company was unable to get to that community in its initial moves.[120]

On Day 2, N Company moved in and conducted searches. The Afghan troops and Canadian mentors uncovered four mortars, huge amounts of medical supplies, and bloodied clothing (notably, all of the medical supplies came from the International Committee of the Red Cross).[121] Key leadership engagements were conducted and it appeared as though the enemy went to ground. British and Afghan search teams found an IED facility in Salavat but little else.[122] The Canadian assessment was that "the absence of IED attacks in the area of operations suggests that the insurgents may have been surprised…."[123] The dismounted patrols continued in all objective areas.

A source called the Panjwayi Joint District Coordination Centre and told the staff that the insurgent commanders in the area met secretly in Nakhonay and agreed to cache their weapons and either exfiltrate or blend into the population. One commander refused and planned to move his force into Malajat to hide. Searches continued on 9 October. N Company uncovered a significant weapons and IED cache: "the find was so sizeable that a second patrol may be cancelled in order to move all the present material back to N Company's leaguer. The only contact was a "shoot and scoot" by a pair of insurgents on a motorcycle.[124]

The enemy reacted and placed IEDs. A Royal Marine patrol engaged a triggerman in one event and numerous IEDs were uncovered. By 11 October, Operation ARAY petered out. The decision was taken to airlift 42 Commando out of the area. As N Company combat team conducted its withdrawal on 10 October, the lead Husky EROC vehicle trigged an IED, which resulted in a mobility kill. A Leopard C2 from A Squadron manoeuvred and also triggered an IED: the crew spotted the triggerman and engaged him with the 105mm gun, killing him.[125]

Ultimately, what were the effects of Operation ARAY? CIMIC reported that Haji Baran thought the operation was a success because he heard that "the people of Nakhonay were very happy with the outcome of Operation ARAY and especially delighted that there were no civilian casualties. It was also reported that during the searches people were coming out of their compounds and asking the [coalition forces] if they needed help."[126] Sensitive site exploitation produced numerous documents, including: the means to make homemade explosives, how to build radio-commanded IEDs, and how to operate mortars, rockets and recoilless rifles. In the end, this "further indicates the significance of the facilitation role that Nakhonay plays in the central Kandahar insurgency."[127]

Arghandab and Lower Shah Wali Kot Operations, October 2008

Maj Dean Tremblay and Recce Squadron took over in early October. Once on the ground, Tremblay and his troops discovered that the two districts were quite distinct. Agriculturally prosperous Arghandab was the more economically sophisticated of the two, while the armoured soldiers dubbed the hilly and rocky Shah Wali Kot "the badlands." Ostensibly, Recce Squadron was to implement the usual lines of operations in the area but there were significant troops-to-task issues. Organized into two eight-vehicle Coyote troops, with Recce Platoon from 3 RCR and an engineer section added, the force was thin on the ground. Based in FOB Frontenac near the Dahla Dam, Recce Squadron was expected to handle both the lower Shah Wali Kot and Arghandab Districts. The only allied forces consisted of 30 ineffective police located in the Shah Wali Kot District Centre.

Photo Credit: Author

Increased concern over insurgent activity in eastern Panjwayi District led to the irregular surge of—Canadian Battle Group, Afghan and OMLT, as well as Regional Battle Group (South)—forces to the Salavat area throughout fall. The smaller hill in the middle is Salavat Ghar, with the community of Salavat at its base and to the right. Chalghowr is in the foreground.

There was a security force for the dam project hired by CIDA but they proved to be problematic. Another private security force protecting a road construction project was in the area but its efforts were not coordinated with Recce Squadron at all.[128] (See Figure 4-12.)

Down in Arghandab, there was an Afghan infantry company with Canadian mentors, the district police, and a 20-man American Police Mentor Team. An American special forces ODA was also active, with its accompanying Afghan platoon. Again, these three organizations had no command relationship to each other, or with Recce Squadron. Informal relationships were established as much as possible between the players to move information between them and react in case of emergencies.[129]

Recce Squadron patrolled both districts to further define the situation. With a small two-man CIMIC detachment from the PRT, their ability to influence the development situation was limited. Even though there was a multi-million dollar signature project in the middle of the area, there were next to no spin-off economic benefits to the local population in any way. Indeed, when Maj Tremblay challenged a senior CIDA official on this, he was told, "I don't give a fuck about Shah Wali Kot District."[130]

Whenever the Coyotes rolled, they generated a significant amount of enemy communications traffic. Consequently, Recce Squadron was able to define the enemy west of the Tarinkot Road and learned they were supported by enemy lodgments in Khakrez: this was not new but there was little the coalition forces could do about it. The Afghan leaders in Shah Wali Kot "stated that the current location of FOB Frontenac is ineffective because few local nationals live in the vicinity and the FOB does not block any insurgent routes from Khakrez down to Shah Wali Kot." Local commanders suggested to the Canadians that an Afghan army position in Tabin village "would be more useful in deterring insurgent movement if it were relocated to Khakrez."[131]

Over a few weeks, Recce Squadron patrols manoeuvred-to-collect and did what they could to keep Route Oregon open. Lacking a dedicated collection capability, the squadron signals staff improvised. On one occasion, an allied collection organization broke down and, while repairing its vehicles at FOB Frontenac, assisted with defining enemy activity. Essentially, the "seam" identified earlier by Maj Boivin and his squadron between Khakrez and Kandahar City was in heavy play, with a substantial amount of transient enemy traffic moving southeast. There was a dedicated enemy cell operating in Mansurabad, a defended location that could only be taken out with a deliberate operation. Another cluster of enemy activity was defined in the Jelawur area in Arghandab.

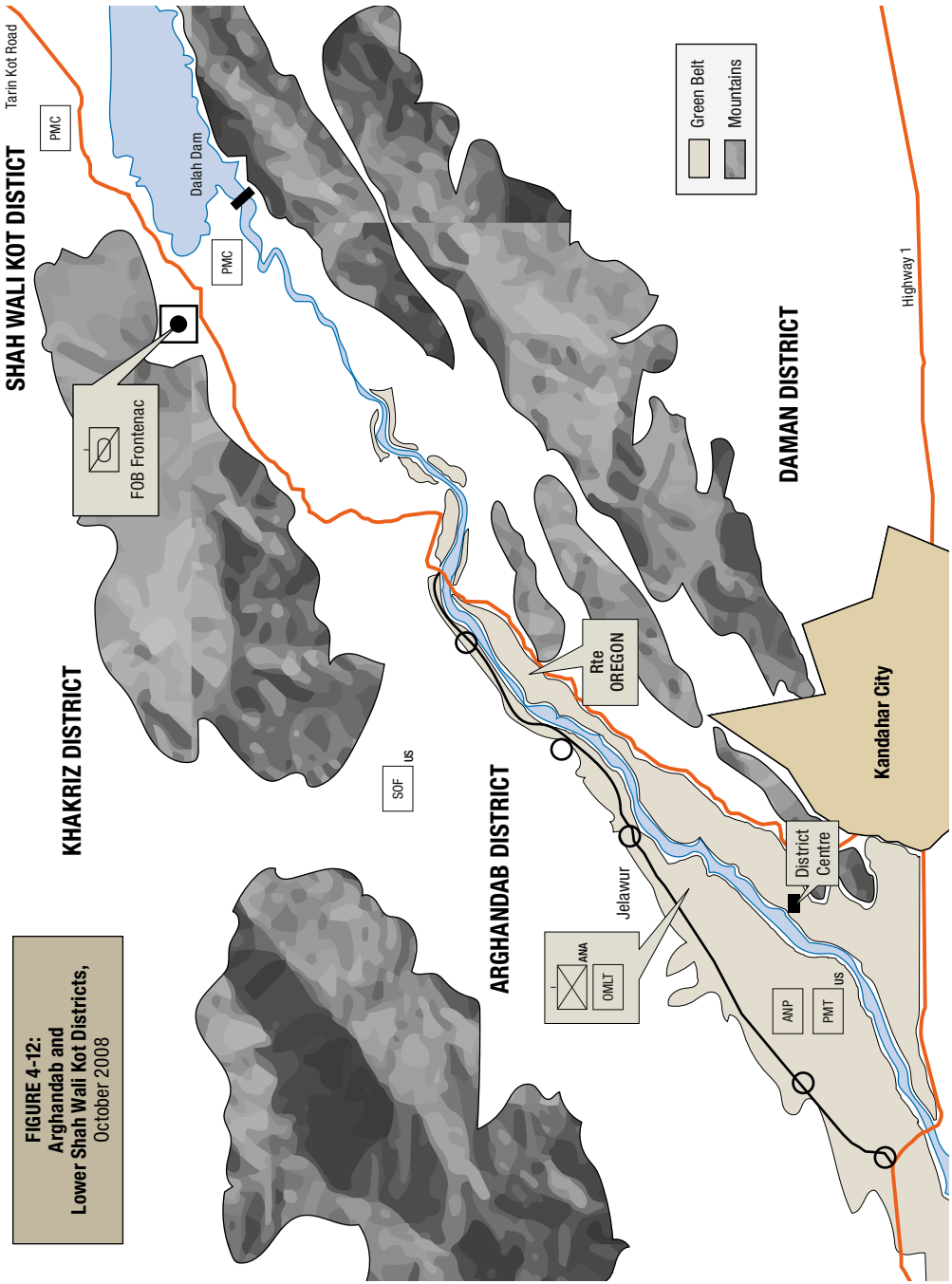


Figure 4-12: Arghandab and Lower Shah Wali Kot Districts, October 2008

Operation ARAY, however, reduced the ability of the reconnaissance troops to patrol Route Oregon with the frequency they wanted, and Tremblay was concerned that this state of affairs would allow the enemy to flow back in and lay IED's on the route. Another concern was the QRF task for the Dahla Dam, which kept part of the small force on standby in FOB Frontenac: This reduced the patrolling sortie rate.[132]

The plan, however, was to move the Afghan strong point to Jelawur, which was a hotbed of insurgent activity. Canadian engineers were prepared to move in and build the position, but there were inexplicable delays. Meanwhile, there was word of a weapons cache near the Arghandab District Centre. Recce Squadron and Afghan police conducted Operation SPARAL on 22 October but found nothing. Four days later, a Coyote patrol hit an IED, wounding two and producing yet another immobilized Coyote.[133] Local reports came in that the enemy leadership was meeting in the northern districts to prepare further operations in Arghandab but there was no means to collaborate these reports. Not much was going on in Arghandab but there were local complaints that the district leader was not releasing wheat seed, as promised, in return for not planting poppies.[134]

Maywand Operations, October 2008

The situation in Maywand District remained stable. FOB Ramrod was still under construction, while FOB Hutal served as a crucial presence and a stepping-off point for patrols in the town. For the most part, Afghan police and Afghan army personnel, mentored by American police mentors and Canadian OMLT personnel, focused on keeping Highway 1 swept in their area of operation. The small Canadian CIMIC and PSYOPS detachment assisted in these efforts. There were occasional but non-lethal IED strikes against Canadian and American vehicles, but nothing systematic when compared to Zharey or Panjwayi. this time, there were few ambushes on Highway 1. 2-2 Infantry, however, had mobility issues.[135] The lack of protracted maintenance for their RG-31, RG-33 and MRAP vehicles plus multiple mobility kills from IED strikes had a cumulative effect (recall that 2-2 Infantry's first contact with these vehicles was on landing at KAF in July–August).

The CIMIC detachment was dependent on the OMLT for transport and protection, so when the Afghan infantry company was ripped away from FOB Hutal, CIMIC was grounded, which, in turn, limited where it could go and thus what it could do. The Afghan police lacked transport and were essentially confined to Hutal. Despite these limitations the Canadians in Maywand tracked enemy activity designed to exploit the reduced patrolling presence: "the Taliban are discussing the possibility of arresting people for theft, public disorder, and murder. The Maywand [police] do not have vehicles or radios—this creates a void that the Taliban are all too ready to fill."[136]

CIMIC also learned that the insurgents established illegal vehicle checkpoints in parts of the district.[137] The combination of the two posed a direct threat to the legitimacy of the provincial and the Afghan government in that there was now an established parallel power operating in the district. It was no longer just a waypoint for the resupply of enemy forces in Zharey and Panjwayi.

To make a point that they were in the ascendency in Maywand, the insurgents conducted a horrific atrocity. Sometime on 15 October, insurgents on Highway 1 hijacked a bus. Claiming that the passengers were soldiers dressed in civilian clothes, the men were taken away in groups of six or seven, had their hands bound, and were executed with single shots to the head or in the case of one group, beheaded. Maywand police and mentors supported by OH-58D recce helicopters discovered the killing sites, and the Afghan police in Kandahar took control of the investigation. Eventually, between 27 and 30 bodies were discovered.[138]

2-2 Infantry's main effort in October was Operation HAWALEA, conducted at the end of the month. HAWALEAH's purpose was to define the enemy in the Garmabak Pass area between Ghorak and Maywand. LTC Hurlbut launched his forces into the area on 29 October but there was virtually no resistance short of an RPG round and a rocket lofted at the manoeuvring companies. Surprisingly, 2-2 Infantry discovered that there were pockets of pro-government communities and that the Ghorak police actually raided suspect communities regularly. The closer to Hutal one got, it seemed, the more anti-government the population was. Unfortunately, Lt.-Col. Hurlbut was forced to call off the operation because of an excessively large number of vehicle breakdowns.[139]

Kandahar City Operations, November–December 2008

The insurgent assassination campaign in the city gathered momentum throughout November as the PRT focused its efforts on reconstruction and development. The first killing in October involved an Afghan police lieutenant colonel who was gunned down with an AK-47 in a market, followed by the killing of Capt. Ahmad Shad from 5th Kandak, who was murdered under similar circumstances. A National Directorate of Security colonel was also assassinated, which attenuated city-wide intelligence operations temporarily.[140] Information led to a combined Afghan-ISAF raid on a Loy Wala compound on 8 November. Mir Ahmad, who was linked to senior Taliban leader Hafiz Majid, was apprehended, along with Imam Qari Saf. Saf's specialty was "to indoctrinate young men to the insurgent cause"[141] presumably in the district madrassas and mosques.

The Afghan security forces displayed a level of previously unseen initiative and operational security during this time. On 10 November, Canadian mentors from 2nd (Strike) Kandak accompanied their counterparts as they unexpectedly deployed to a site in the city to await orders for an unannounced, unnamed, five-day operation (later dubbed Operation ATAL 32).

The 1-205 Brigade headquarters arrived, and elements of all five kandaks converged on the city. The Afghan forces then launched a series of cordon and search operations in the city, one district at a time, working closely with the National Directorate of Security and the police. In the first 24 hours, the National Directorate of Security detained 28 possible insurgents, criminals, or both, including one Taliban leader; weapons and opium were also confiscated. After 72 hours of operations, there was "an unexpected protest in [Kandahar City] sponsored by the Afghan National Reconciliation Council (ANRC)" who, apparently, decided to protest ISAF air strikes in Shah Wali Kot. The Afghan army suspended ATAL 32 for 24 hours. During this time, insurgents detonated a huge vehicle-borne suicide IED next to the National Directorate of Security headquarters and the Provincial Shura building, killing eight and wounding 50 civilians. The situation could have been worse: a brave Afghan policeman became suspicious and halted the truck before it could get closer to the building. Sadly, he was killed in the blast.[142] The Role 3 hospital at KAF was alerted. The message from the insurgents was clear: stop ATAL 32 or else.[143] The OCC-P helped coordinate the response, while the PRT received information that Camp Nathan Smith was next on a suicide IED hit list and made the appropriate security preparations that night. What impressed the Canadians was that the Afghan police could be seen on television "dealing with the incident without any coalition assistance."[144]

While this drama was under resolution, another unfolded. Twelve female teachers and students departing a girl's school in District 8 were subjected to an acid attack conducted by two men on a motorcycle. All had to be treated at Mirwais hospital. The international media outcry was as instantaneous as it was gargantuan. Governor Raufi, and for that matter, TF Kandahar's information operations personnel, now had a rare platform to globally denounce the Taliban and its allies.[145]

The Afghans decided to pause for 48 hours, and not strictly because of the intimidation. The attack on the National Directorate of Security meant that "that agency is no longer able to participate in or provide intelligence for the operation, temporarily halting further searches targeting insurgents."[146] The 1-205 Brigade commander wanted to mount a series of regular pulse operations into the city to maintain momentum but the next foray uncovered nothing. The police, on the other hand, had three people in custody who were part of the acid attack. Governor Raufi directed the resumption of Operation ATAL 32.

There were more successful cordon and searches but the Afghan police commander in District 3 where they were conducted was assassinated in retaliation on 19 November. The PRT Force Protection Company continued with its patrols and found armed Afghans protecting their homes and businesses. Most appeared friendly and receptive to the Canadian presence. Reports continued to flow in that the Taliban shadow governor for Kandahar, Ayub Akhundzada, was adamant that Camp Nathan Smith be targeted as soon as possible

to maintain the insurgent campaign's momentum. Apparently, he wanted a military target destroyed as soon as possible because he was taking heat from his superiors and his supporters regarding the large number of Afghan civilian casualties.[147]

Operation ATAL 32 was suspended again on 27 November, for reasons unknown to the OMLT. The assassinations and bombs started again. This time, police near Mirwais Hospital were targeted with a bomb (killing six and wounding six) and an Afghan contractor was shot as a message to others not to bid on ISAF contracts. A bicycle-borne IED was found rigged to kill school children at a girl's school: it was dismantled and exploited by the PRT's IED experts. Another find involved a propane bomb set to kill the provincial Minister of Education. Again, PRT engineers handled its dismantling. Several more near-misses were recorded against Kandahar City police sub-station commanders: three officers were nearly killed in various attacks in late December. Another senior National Directorate of Security commander was not so lucky and was killed.[148]

Almost as an afterthought, TF Kandahar reported the assassinations of three Kandahar City religious figures. The most prominent was Abdul Qayum, the Mullah of the Red Mosque. Qayum was murdered while he was in the process of reciting the Koran. Two other members of the Kandahar Ulema Shura were shot and killed in December.[149]

This litany of death and destruction had a purpose. The variety and selectivity of the targets precluded any suggestion that these were random acts. The insurgents were specifically targeting community leaders and community security as much as they were targeting the larger security organizations like the National Directorate of Security. From September to December 2008, there were 20 assassinations, two kidnappings, and 15 IED attacks, as well as several aborted attempts. January would see five more IED attacks, four more assassinations, and another kidnapping.

What effect did all of this have on the overall Canadian effort? First, according to PRT reports, there was not a lot of visible Canadian-supported development going on during this time. More behind-the-scenes aspects of capacity-building at the provincial level continued, however. Contact was made with the municipal level authorities. CIMIC patrols continued with their efforts in their assigned districts. Police mentors continued to mentor. The main effect was on the "implementing partner" relationships, especially the UN ones. Once the security situation deteriorated, they ran for cover, which in turn attenuated critical programmes like the Community Development Councils. The cultural divide between CIDA and CIMIC, as well as a capability divide, precluded the use of CIMIC to do UN HABITAT programming, for example. All of this made progress in Kandahar City extremely difficult to measure and thus the ability to report back to Ottawa and feed the mechanisms of the new Canadian strategy became problematic.

The positive aspect of the situation was that Canadians saw Afghans, army, police and standby police work together on Operation ATAL 32 with virtually no mentoring. They could conduct effective operations when they deemed it critical to do so. The Canadian Army assisted with first response EOD and presence patrols with Force Protection Company, but the bulk of the action was Afghan. This was measurable progress.

Panjwayi District Operations, November–December 2008

Canadian operations in the district kicked off with MUTAFIQ TANDAR 6. Unlike previous "river runs," this one carried with it some controversy. BGen Thompson and LCol Barrett concurred that Strong Points Mushan and Haji should be evacuated and destroyed in a deliberate operation while Mushan was resupplied. The battle group justified this option noting that "this realignment will enable the battle group to force project to a higher troop density throughout Panjwayi and demonstrate to the population our will to enhance security."[150] This objective was slightly changed later to "consolidate forces in Stability Box Sperwan."[151] The other view, held by CEFCOM commander LGen Mike Gauthier, was that Canadian media and the Taliban would interpret this as a retreat. The battle group countered that it thought it could mitigate any "bad IO" with the population through district leader Haji Baran. LCol Barrett told LGen Gauthier while he was visiting that even the Afghans did not want to man Zangabad or Haji. LCol Jocelyn Paul, Commanding Officer of the follow-on battle group who was over on his recce, did not want to man them either and told Barrett that his men "would bleed" if they went in there. Gauthier finally caved in and accepted the withdrawal.[152] (See Figures 4-13 and 4-14.)

Operation MUTAFIQ TANDAR 6 broke down into two phases. The first went in on 6 November, with A Squadron leading the way down the Arghandab riverbed to Strong Point Haji. The enemy attempted to engage with anti-tank weapons on four occasions: all were disrupted with Hellfires dropped from MQ-1 Predators and MQ-9 Reapers, and gunfire from F Battery's M-777 guns and OH-58D Warrior helicopters. Eight enemy were killed in these engagements.[153] M Company implemented an aggressive series of patrols in order to deceive the enemy as to what was happening.

Strong Point Haji was dismantled. While this was in progress, the enemy mortared the site with a high volume of fire. An A Squadron Leopard 2A6M, after some time, finally observed the mortar spotter and engaged him with 120mm fire. The forces in Strong Point Zangabad observed the mortar locations and engaged with their own mortars. Another insurgent mortar opened up but could not be located or engaged.[154]

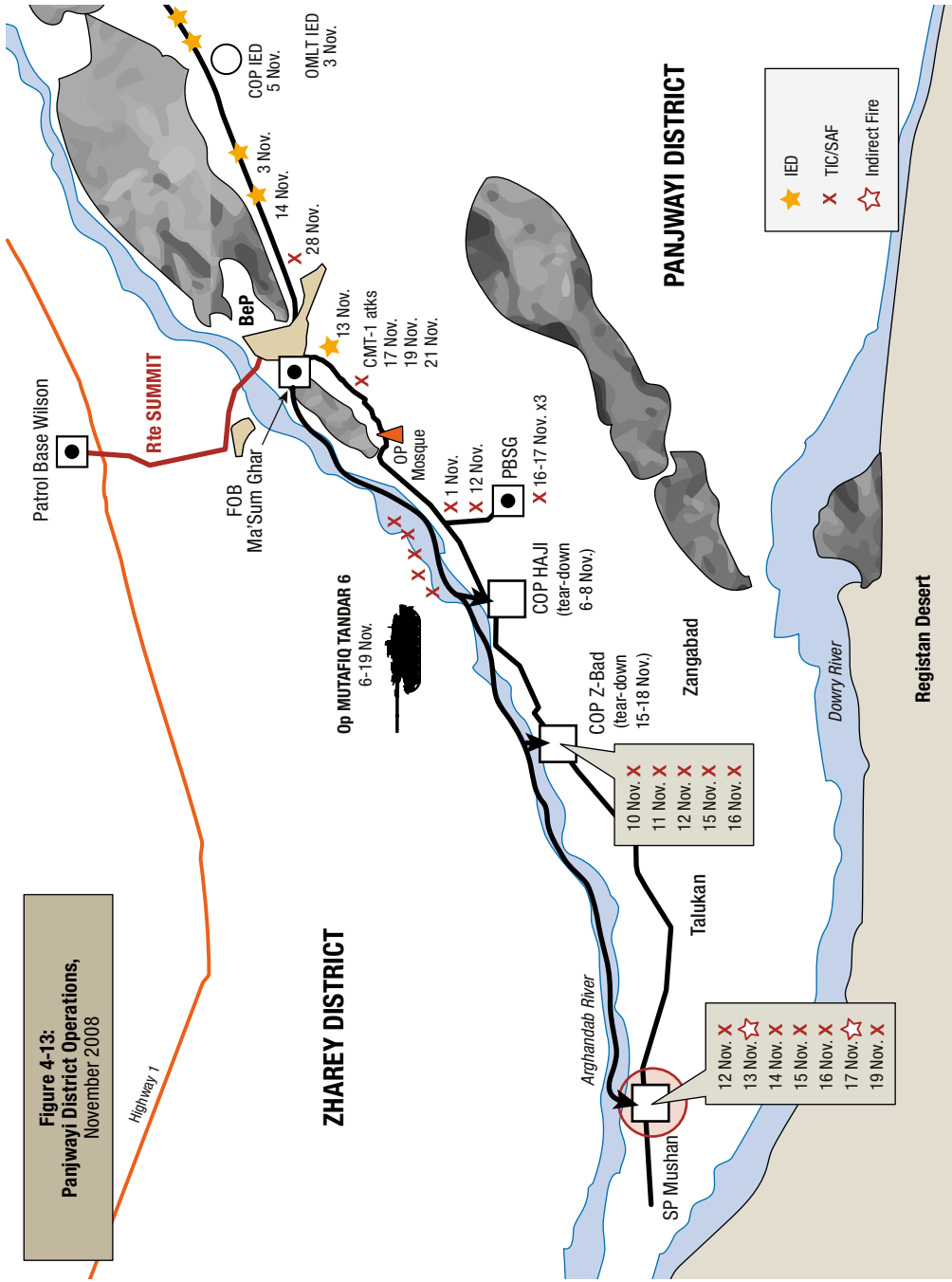


Figure 4-13: Panjwayi District Operations, November 2008

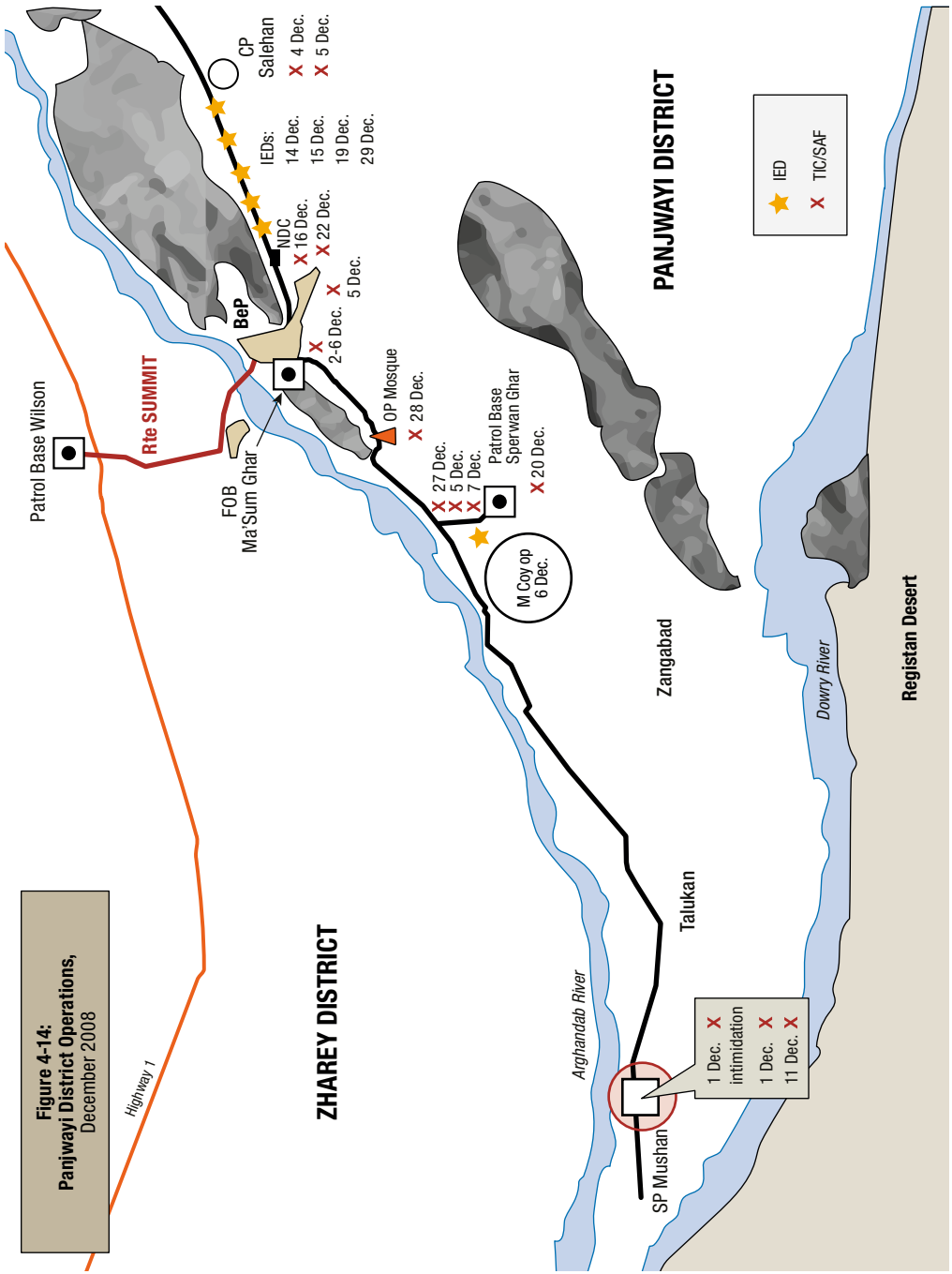


Figure 4-14: Panjwayi District Operations, December 2008

As the Canadian force leaguered and prepared for the next move west, the Afghan commander in Mushan held a shura with elders there. They told him that they were about to send an emissary to the Taliban and give them an ultimatum: "The town does not support them, and the Taliban are not allowed to purchase items from the bazaar anymore." This was a significant victory. After months and months of taking fire, conducting aggressive patrols, and connecting with the population, Strong Point Mushan was now reaping the benefits of their actions and the population was coming off the fence. In no other location in the district had the population made such remonstrations to the Taliban. When the Taliban threatened the shopkeepers the following day, they responded by keeping their shops open all night. An Afghan–Canadian patrol received information on a weapons cache and uncovered 32 Chinese anti-personnel mines, 15 bricks of Russian plastic explosive, and medical supplies.[155]

This defiance of the Taliban led to seven days of violence directed at the strong point and its patrols. For the most part, this was "shoot and scoot" small-arms fire with some mortaring thrown in.[156] Strong Point Zangabad also received mortar fire for four days, to which the Canadians responded with 155mm artillery. A Squadron combat team was launched again on 17 November as the EROC suite cleared Routes Fosters West to Brown and then north to a breach into the Arghandab riverbed. From here, the column proceeded west to Strong Point Zangabad and initiated the teardown. M Company, once again, aggressively patrolled and provoked limited enemy responses that were dealt with by a variety of weapons systems. The EROC Husky and Buffalo vehicles hit IEDs, which slowed things down but the enemy continued to harass the column with mortar fire. The mortars were eventually dispatched with direct fire, when possible, or 155mm fire from the M-777s when necessary. On 16 November, A Squadron moved on to Mushan for the resupply operation and the Afghan infantry companies relieved each other: 3rd Company from 2nd Kandak took over from 2nd Company and the Canadian mentors rotated. Canadian engineers built a new helicopter pad using a structure called "Rhino Snot" and made several other improvements to the strong point. A volley of enemy mortars was suppressed with 44 rounds of high explosive fired by F Battery. When mortar fire continued the next day, killing one Afghan soldier and wounding five more, a Leopard tank troop and an infantry platoon launched a hasty attack from the strong point, killed the crew, and seized the mortar itself. On 19 November, A Squadron departed Mushan and headed south to the Dori River, west and then north through the open Maywand Dasht and then back to Ma'Sum Ghar. Operation MUTAFIQ TANDAR 6 was complete.[157]

Photo Credit: Author

Improvised explosive device attacks continued to immobilize Canadian vehicles on Route Fosters and in the Arghandab riverbed. Here, a Taurus armoured recovery vehicle tows a Leopard 2A6M to "Tango Maintenance" at Ma'Sum Ghar for repairs.

M Company continued with Operation TAZAWORAT in an effort to ensure concurrent security in Stability Box Sperwan. Canadian engineers and local nationals working together to improve the roads in the area were engaged with harassing fire. An engineer LAV engaged the insurgents with 25mm fire, killing both of them, and attacks ceased.[158]

Concurrent with the Operation MUTAFIQ TANDAR 6 endgame in late November, the enemy mounted a series of attacks in the area between Sperwan Ghar and Ma'Sum Ghar. OP Mosque was engaged for the first time in months, and two IED attacks occurred on Route Fosters West. CMT-1 was hit three times with small arms and a mortar between 17 and 21 November. These events were overshadowed by MUTAFIQ TANDAR 6. When combined with the five IED strikes that took place on Fosters East during the month, including a strike against a Canadian NSE combat logistics patrol, it was unclear that there was a relationship between enemy activity in the two parts of the district.

That perception changed in December. After the closure of Strong Points Zangabad and Haji, the number of incidents from Sperwan Ghar east along Fosters West to Fosters East skyrocketed. The Afghan troops at Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar came under direct attack. There were three sustained TICs along Route Brown, and a cluster of IEDs were uncovered between the Fosters West and Brown intersection and OP Mosque. Small-arms fire was now directed against FOB Ma'Sum Ghar from the south. Three Tank Hill even came under contact on 5 December.[159] The new Afghan infantry company in Mushan did not have the confidence of the population and the people swung back onto the fence. This did not bode well, though there was only a single contact in December.[160]

The worst was yet to come. The New District Centre came under attack three times in December, a direct insurgent challenge to the seat of governance. The insurgents overran a police checkpoint in Bazaar-e Panjwayi right next to FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, killing three police and abducting two more. They left behind what appeared to be a booby trap but the Canadian QRF deployed and determined that the device was fake. As they were mounting up in their engineer LAV to depart, they triggered another device, killing WO Gaétan Roberge from 2 R22eR and Sgt Gregory Kruse from 2 Combat Engineer Regiment. Two Afghan police were also killed, and four other Canadians and an interpreter were wounded.[161]

Further east, there were four IED attacks against Afghans and Canadians along Fosters East. The checkpoint at Salehan came under contact twice, and on one occasion Canadian police mentors and a handful of Afghan police fought off insurgents. The combination of these events indicated there was a significant shift in emphasis for the insurgency in Panjwayi District, one that was not attributable merely to the change in season.

To what extent was the increased violence in Panjwayi East connected to the insurgents' north-south consolidation between the Nakhonay networks and those in Panjwayi West, overflow from coalition operations in Asheque–Senjaray in Zharey District, or an increasingly robust insurgent presence in Salavat–Nakhonay? The pattern of behaviour favoured the idea that enemy consolidation in Panjwayi West–Nakhonay fuelled attacks against the Sperwan Ghar–Ma'Sum Ghar area and supported the Salavat–Nakhonay efforts along Fosters East. The mountains between Asheque–Senjaray in Zharey and Fosters East are barren and anything moving over them is easily observed, assuming there was a platform available to conduct the observation. The possibility of the Asheque–Senjaray cells conducting operations into Bazaar-e Panjwayi by moving along the river east of Route Summit could not be ruled out, however, but with the increased scrutiny directed at Senjaray, it was less likely.

What was Canada able to accomplish on the governance and development fronts in Panjwayi District during this time? Canadian CIMIC teams sketched out several broad issues. There was development going on in the district and it was facilitated through the development shura. There was little CIMIC reportage passed up to TF Kandahar that used

National Solidarity Programme/District Development Assembly/Community Development Council terminology: the reports discussed food distribution, large construction projects, specifically, the roads and water issues in Bazaar-e Panjwayi. Along with these large projects, however, came various shades of corruption associated with each one, coupled with struggles between factions over who controlled or otherwise benefited financially from them. As we have seen, there was competition between Haji Baran and Haji Agha Lalai Dastagiri. CIMIC uncovered connections between Baran and Haji Agha Lalai from Sperwan (called "Haji Dollars" to distinguish him from Dastagiri) and between Baran and the former Maywand District leader, Haji Saifullah. Someone also ran an extortion racket using "police" against the civilian contract trucks supporting CMT-1, while another entity allegedly connected to Dastagiri withheld a portion of the World Food Programme allocation for the district and spirited it off to a warehouse in Kandahar City for re-sale on the open market.[162]

What appeared to be going well were the CMT-1 and the Fosters paving project. Yes, progress was slow and, yes, the enemy, and possibly other entities, attacked it with some regularity. However, the visible economic spin-offs in the district, particularly in Bazaar-e Panjwayi, were tangible. The quality of life for the 400 or so workers and their families noticeably improved during the course of the project—and was measurable. What CMT-1 called a "micro-economy" grew around the project to cater to the workers, something that collaterally improved the livelihoods of people along Fosters West as the project inched forward. Blue Hackle security did not extort from the local population as the police had in the past. Naturally, district leader Baran threatened to apply pressure to cut off funds to the workers because they were, in his view, moving too slowly. Others believed Baran was peeved about not getting a big enough slice of the financial action.[163]

The district National Directorate of Security commander, Col. Faiz, was no fool and had more than an inkling as to what was going on. However, Haji Baran was no fool either. He insisted that Faiz be excluded from the district security shura, then behaved histrionically over "corruption" on the Fosters paving project and threatened to go to the media because of Canadian "inaction." The CIMIC team marveled when Baran threatened to resign because people were saying "bad things" about him to the Governor.[164]

Col. Faiz aside, policing was still problematic. The P-OMLT informally met with their American and CIVPOL counterparts to divide the labour: the American police mentors would work with Bismillah Khan, the chief, while P-OMLT would handle field operations and CIVPOL training. Then, all of a sudden, the chief disappeared, claiming he had to attend shuras in the city. The police virtually deserted for the Eid holiday, leaving the P-OMLT to prop everything up. Brig.-Gen. Matiullah finally replaced Khan with Mohammad Naeem, who set out to re-professionalize what he had left to work with.[165]

Every possible entity came out of the woodwork sniffing for money on the PSS Sperwan project, so much so that the only player who recalled that the objective was actually to build a police station were the Canadians. The Byzantine negotiations over who would build, who would protect the builders and who would handle the convoys are beyond this study, but it was evident that all factions in Panjwayi wanted a piece of the action—or else bad things would happen. For example, a worker was kidnapped, taken to Nakhonay, beaten, threatened and then released. Was this Taliban action or not? An informant working for M Company in Sperwan who provided information on a variety of topics was found beaten to death. Was this a Taliban action or not?[166] Once again, commercial violence followed projects where there was a lot of Canadian or allied money involved and then overlapped with insurgent violence, who saw the projects as both sources for funding for their operations, and as things to attack to demonstrate their effect. The new Canadian strategy could in no way relate these behaviours effectively in a manner measurable to a large audience back in Canada. Indeed, TF Kandahar's ability to track and respond to this on a short-term basis was, in fact, quite limited. Panjwayi was a coliseum of a different sort from Zharey, but a coliseum nonetheless.

Zharey District Operations, November–December 2008

Those who thought that so-called fighting season was over were dismayed by the level of enemy activity in Zharey District in November. The enemy's operational tempo against Strong Points Lakokhel, Pulchakan and Spin Pir was as vigorous as it was in October, with 14 attacks on Lakokhel alone (see Figures 4-15a and 4-15b.) The difference was an increased level of enemy coordination between attacks on both Lakokhel and Pulchakan, and in one case a coordinated attack against both positions. What was more alarming was the significant increase in enemy activity directed against Stability Box JUNO: the number of incidents doubled compared to incidents in October and coincided with a significant number of rocket attacks against FOB Ma'Sum Ghar.[167] The situation was aggravated further by what appeared to be a completely separate but associated enemy front operating in Senjaray.

Operation JANGISIOUX patrols continued throughout the month with very little reported contact. On 6 November, an Afghan/Canadian patrol from Strong Point Lakokhel was engaged with small-arms and RPG fire. The interpreter was wounded and paralyzed. Cpl Mark McLaren crawled to his location and extracted him under fire. Smoke and high explosive fire was called in and the patrol broke contact and made its way back to the strong point. Cpl McLaren was awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions but was subsequently killed in an IED blast later in the tour.

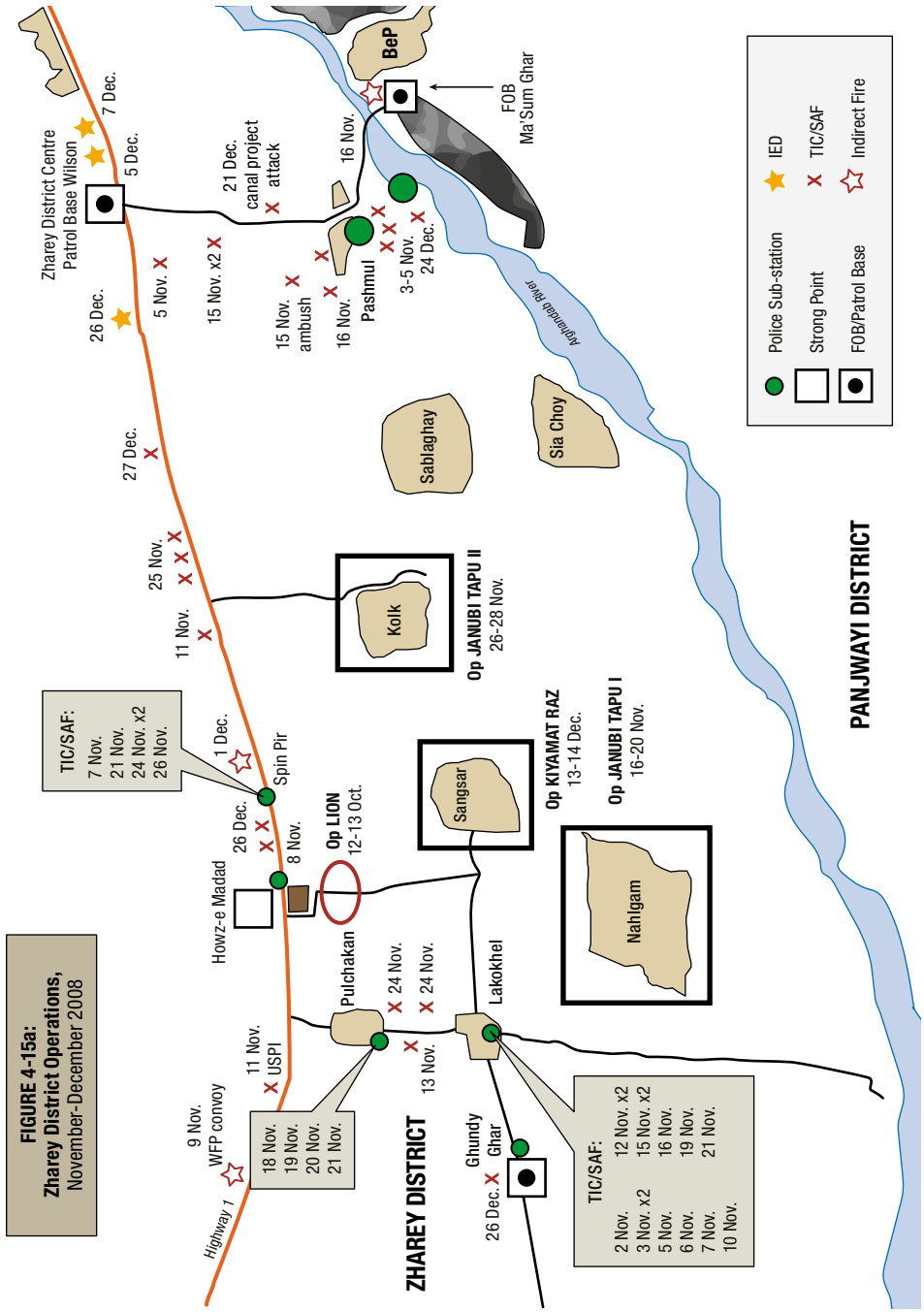


Figure 4-15a: Zharey District Operations, November-December 2008

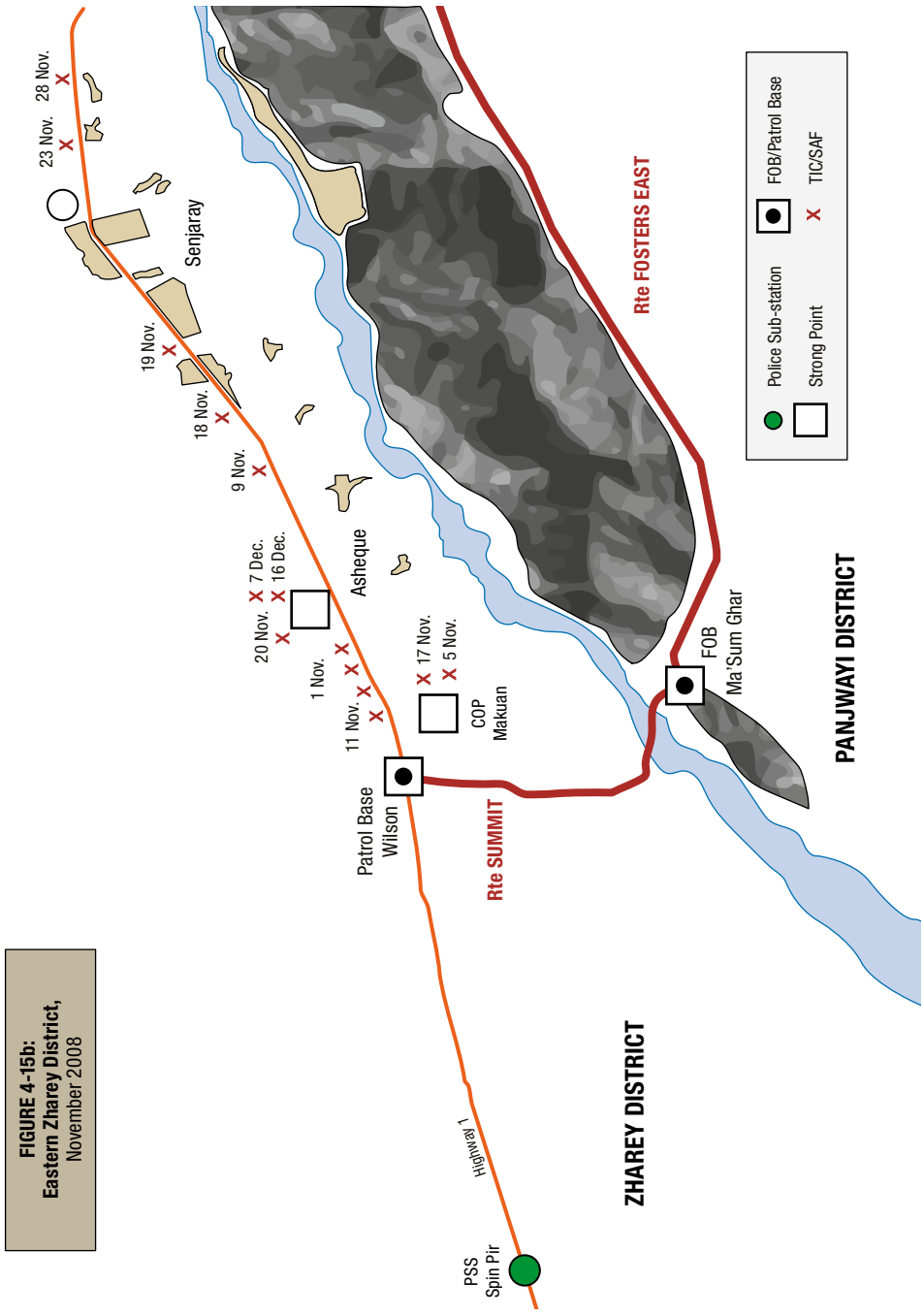


FIGURE 4-15b:
Eastern Zharey District,
November 2008

Figure 4-15b: Eastern Zharey District, November 2008

The larger operations mounted in the district involved 3rd Kandak and mentors who launched a cordon and search into Makuan on 5-6 November, and the JANUBI TAPU series in the last half of the month. Operation JANUBI TAPU brought the Regional Battle Group (South), in this case, 42 Commando (Royal Marines), back into the Canadian area of operation for a limited time. The objectives of JANUBI TAPU I and II were to raid enemy sanctuaries in Nahlgam and Kolk, in part to draw off enemy resources from the upcoming voter registration process.

JANUBI TAPU I started on 14 November with the quiet deployment of the 42 Commando mortars to Ghundy Ghar, and the simultaneous launch of N Company into the Pashmul area on two large patrols as a diversion, while 42 Commando prepared and mounted an air assault on Nahlgam. N Company and Afghan police with American mentors came under contact on 15 November from multiple locations with a high volume of fire once they moved into the extremely close terrain around Pashmul. N Company returned suppressive fire and called in 16 rounds of 155mm high explosive from the guns. Part of one Canadian platoon was pinned down and could not extricate. The joint terminal attack controller was able to vector in close air support, with a GBU-12 bomb dropped on one compound from where fire was emanating and the platoon was able to pull back. Another fire mission of six rounds suppressed the enemy team engaging the police.[168] The next day, another deliberate patrol into Pashmul encountered insurgent mortar fire and direct fire. Canadian small-arms fire and artillery suppressed the enemy while an MQ-9 Reaper spotted another four-man team and engaged with Hellfire missiles.[169] Fifteen minutes later, the Royal Marines touched down and exited their Sea King helicopters at a landing zone in Nahlgam. There were three substantial contacts throughout the morning as they swept through the fortified town where they uncovered a large IED factory and called in an exploitation team.[170]

During the course of operations, a two-man sniper team situated on a rooftop, covering an Afghan–Canadian patrol was spotted and came under fire. One member of the team was critically wounded, and his partner MCpl Jeremy Pinchin covered him while administering first aid. Numerous enemy rounds impacted on Pinchin's body armour as he did so. They were able to successfully extricate from the situation and link up with friendly forces. MCpl Pinchin was awarded the Star of Military Valour for his actions. The searches continued the next day resulting in three more contacts with little to report. The Royal Marines narrowly avoided a motorcycle-borne suicide IED attack. With diminishing returns, the decision was made to lift K and L companies out on 20 November. One important effect was that Operation JANUBI TAPU shook loose a prominent Taliban commander who was being tracked by the ASIC. An MQ-9 Reaper was brought online to gain positive identification but the targeting team could not meet the rule of engagement criteria. Substantial intelligence, however, was collected for future use.[171]

In an important development, the 2nd Kandak leadership decided to unilaterally mount a sweep of rocket launch areas in Zharey, and take along Afghan police for a joint operation. This was in response to a rocket attack that killed two Afghan soldiers and wounded four. At the last minute, unmentored police replaced the P-OMLT at the behest of the deputy chief of police. The two infantry companies produced nothing in the cordon and search operations, which raised suspicions between the two organizations.[172]

Operation JANUBI TAPU II involved the battle group with a company from 42 Commando attached. The goal was to degrade enemy activity affecting both Highway 1 and Stability Box JUNO radiating from the Kolk area. Two combat teams breached in on the ground while the Royal Marines conducted a company-sized air assault near Kolk. Results were mixed. There were 30 detainees taken by Afghan forces, but it was unclear at the time of operation how important they were. A small weapons cache was uncovered and there was virtually no contact reported. As with the previous operation, enemy leadership was forced to move to another location, which resulted in a productive SOF strike later on.[173]

With the exception of Highway 1 east of Patrol Base Wilson, there were only a handful of contacts recorded for December 2008 in Zharey District, none of which occurred in the first half of the month. It is likely that the JANUBI TAPU series forced what was left of the insurgency in the district to go to ground, as their out-of-area fighters finally departed for the season. 2nd Kandak rotated out and 1st Kandak came in. Canadian and Afghan patrols continued into Pashmul and there were casualties from IEDs. N Company kept uncovering IED manuals and partially constructed devices during the course of the patrol programme. On 14 December 2008, N Company launched Operation KIYAMAT RAZ: a night infiltration of the Sangsar area, which resulted in the seizure of a handful of weapons: "The insurgents did not present to defend" and the enemy were assessed to have vacated the area.[174] Spin Pir was shot up a couple of times and the CMT-2 was engaged on Route Summit, to no effect.

What about development in Zharey District? Though a canal project in the village of Zehdanan was held up to be a success, CIMIC reported that

> Currently there is no real leadership in the village…No clear response on who the current village leader was given. [ELDER] was the former village elder until his abduction by the insurgents in January 2008 who released him days later. After [ELDER]'s abduction he resolved not to maintain a relationship with ISAF with regards to construction efforts. This is perhaps indicative of a lack of organization, which seems to confirm that the insurgents do have an influential role in the village, contrary to what was said by the local nationals.[175]

Indeed, poor police behaviour continued to play into this:

> The village supports the government but they grow weary of the ANP due to the fact that the verbal commands given by the ANP when conducting a search are not appropriate but are demeaning toward the Pashto culture.[176]

District-level development initiatives were hampered by the lack of full-time Canadian coordination. CIMIC, CIDA and CMT representatives once again attempted to meet to coordinate projects but it appeared that the district-level organizations like the District Development Assembly were inoperative. It was evident that the insurgents were interfering with the Community Development Councils. Ideas like the construction of a farmer's market next to FOB Wilson were mooted. The fact that CIMIC, CIDA and CMTs were working together was itself a positive development but it was not enough to capitalize on the lull in enemy activity in western Zharey in December.[177] Indeed, the district leader told the Canadians in mid-December that "the priority for the district at this time was security and until such a time that security issues were addressed, it would be unlikely that other advancements could be made."[178] CMT-2, however, reported success in its activities dealing with water issues along Route Summit. They "established a credible workforce" and that "the capacity of their workers is such that they are able to take on some of the responsibilities of project management, focusing on team leadership."[179] Unfortunately, these gains were not directly connected to positive governance. Yes, they improved the lot of the population, but that improvement did not benefit the government camp significantly at the district or provincial levels. The enemy benefited in that they could tell the population they were, in fact, allowing the Canadians and the government to do these projects on their sufferance.

As for security, Sahardi was not unaware of what was going on. In his view, "there are essentially three different [police] zones of control in Zharey District and that it was contributing to greater insurgent freedom of movement." These were: the Senjaray—controlled "by Presidential decree"—police under Haji Lala; Zharey Dasht refugee camp, under Tooryalai; and the rest of Zharey under Bismillah Khan. Haji Lala was "providing security for himself and his men and not for the community at large." Makuan and Senjaray were a problem because the people there "mostly of the Alizai tribe were providing the insurgents with food and shelter."[180] This made it difficult for the Canadians to develop and then implement a district plan. Canadian CIMIC, DFAIT, OMLT and P-OMLT all agreed that "the primary issue seems to be a lack of trained manpower to adequately secure the district."[181]

Death in December: Operation KASSAT in Senjaray

The Senjaray area along Highway 1 east of FOB Wilson had been a shooting gallery for most of November. Habibullah Jan's death and the imposition of Karzai-controlled police who did not coordinate with the district or any other police severely weakened the government's position in that area.[182] The Afghan National Army launched a one-day operation into Makuan area (Operation COBRA), but for the most part, convoys along the road continued to receive small-arms fire in increasing volumes toward the end of the month. The Afghan National Army conducted morning sweeps along the road, while N Company prepared night ambushes along the river. There were intelligence reports that IEDs were coming into the area courtesy of Commander Zergay, but they were not specific enough to act on.[183] On 13 November, Afghan police discovered a dummy IED in a culvert. As they were assessing it, a secondary device consisting of a PMN anti-personnel mine and a jug of homemade explosive was triggered with a command wire, killing or wounding four police officers.[184] The ASIC warned on 24 November that the enemy were increasingly interested in targeting the morning road sweeps.[185] In the following days, Afghan police and army patrols discovered several command wire IEDs before they could be detonated.[186]

Around 0800 on 5 December 2008, N Company was in the process of conducting a dismounted presence patrol in Pashmul when a soldier triggered a mine or IED. The resulting blast seriously wounded two Canadians, who were subsequently evacuated by helicopter.[187] One hour later, working with a platoon from 1st Kandak mentoring team 71D were conducting their morning Highway 1 sweep for IEDs in Senjaray when the enemy detonated an IED and ambushed them. This IED had no effect. However, as 71D's two RG-31s fired back and extricated from the ambush, a huge IED detonated under one vehicle, flinging it 25 metres off the road into a grape field. The crater was so large it destroyed Highway 1. WO Robert Wilson, Cpl Mark McLaren and Pte Demetrios Diplaros, all from 1 RCR, were killed in the attack.[188]

A coordinated attack against Strong Point Asheque took place on the night of 7 December, further reinforcing the fact that the insurgents were ramping up operations in Senjaray. On the night of 12 December, a Sperwer TUAV mission observed four people working on a Highway 1 culvert west of Senjaray near the location of the 5 December attack. They were seen to "move tactically" and laying what was believed to be a command wire. The team later moved to a mosque in the area. TF Kandahar instructed the PRT to deploy its QRF at first light to investigate. On arrival, the enemy detonated a large IED beneath one of the LAV IIIs, catastrophically destroying it and killing Cpl Thomas Hamilton, Pte Justin Jones and Pte John Curwin. A fourth Canadian was seriously wounded.[189] Normally, the enemy laid the command wire perpendicularly to the road to a firing point.

Photo Credit: Author

Seen from the air looking north, this is the community of Senjaray in Zharey District, the arena for Operation KASSAT KASSAT was conducted in response to multiple deaths of Canadian and allied personnel along the stretch of Highway 1, which can be seen here running east to west along the northern edge of the green belt and the town.

In this case, they laid the command wire in close and parallel to the road for some distance and the route search missed it. That indicated the insurgents were closely observing Canadian and Afghan procedures and adapting to them.[190] Another IED attack on 26 December killed Pte Michael Freeman from 3 RCR.

The deaths of seven Canadians in such a short period produced a variety of pressures on TF Kandahar. The initial response was frustration and an inclination to blame the Afghan National Army. When that wore off, the staff started to look back to see if they missed anything. Then there was LGen Gauthier who, according to one planner, "went ballistic" and demanded that TF Kandahar produce a detailed operations order and plan to go after the IED cell responsible. Second was BGen Thompson "who was pissed" and wanted the identified Taliban commanders involved killed. A "Tiger Team," led by LCol Al Mulawyshyn, was established: it included the battle group and OMLT operations officers and the chief of operations. They were instructed to establish near-term, mid-term and enduring plans to handle Senjaray. This collection of plans was dubbed Operation KASSAT [Revenge].[191] (See Figure 4-16.)

One of the first acts was to cut out Haji Lala from the coalition process. He was scared of the Taliban and severely limited his police patrols. Indeed, the National Directorate of Security reported to the Canadians that there was a *de facto* truce in the area between the local population and the Taliban and, apparently, the local leadership had previously sought approval for that truce from Governor Raufi.[192] PRT commander LCol Woodworth was tasked to keep an eye on him through key leadership engagements. The second was to increase battle group and OMLT/Afghan National Army patrols in the area and regain "White SA." Third was to increase ISTAR coverage over the area, including the new ScanEagle UAVs. Increased use of EROC vehicles in the area was another response. All of these moves constituted phase one.

At the same time, Mulawyshyn and the Tiger Team looked at targeting the IED cell or network that conducted the attacks. This involved detailed focused investigation of enemy methodology by the counter-IED engineers, coupled with dedicated intelligence analysis. The Canadian counter-IED organization had extensive experience with that already and that experience was harnessed. BGen Thompson had the ability to rapidly respond to the intelligence so he authorized streamlining the Joint Prioritized Effects List bureaucracy and improving the link between the ASIC and the Special Operations Intelligence Centre so that Canadian SOF could go after the perpetrators unfettered. Similarly, armed UAVs assigned to operations boxes in the Senjaray area had their targeting processes streamlined.[193]

As to the long-term aspects, Mulawyshyn's Tiger Team recommended placing several of what they called "cameras on a stick" to maintain surveillance over the whole area. They also researched the possibility of using balloon-mounted cameras for "persistent surveillance."

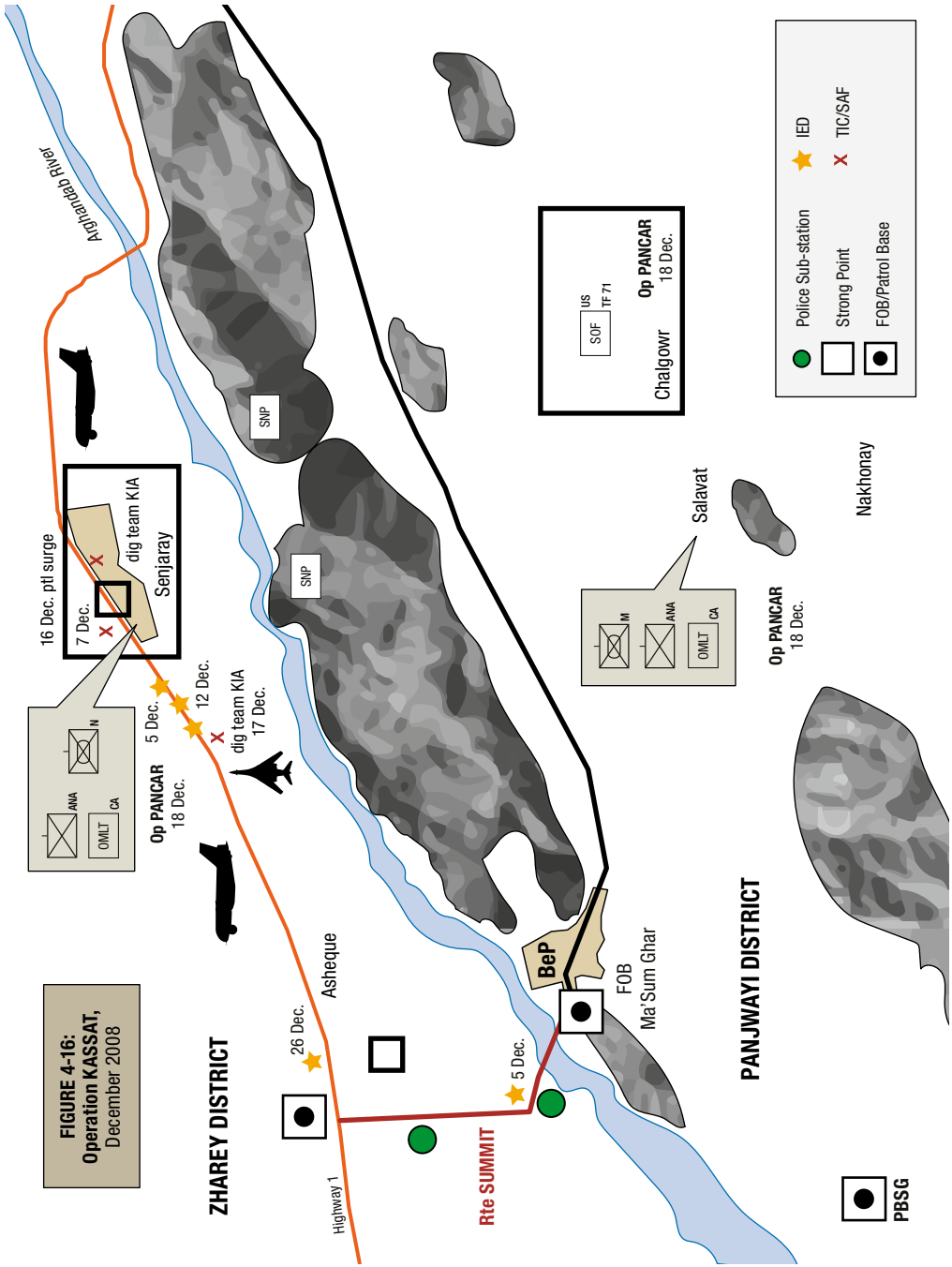


Figure 4-16: Operation KASSAT, December 2008

And, being an engineer, Mulawyshyn looked at Highway 1 itself. There were far too many culverts on that stretch of the road. Anti-IED grates were used on Fosters, so their use was recommended in Senjaray. However, the ultimate aim was to re-jig the irrigation system along the road and remove as many culverts as possible. This was scheduled into 2009 planning and heavily involved the PRT and CIMIC.[194]

To demonstrate that the Canadians retained freedom of movement in Senjaray and to retain the psychological high ground, BGen Thompson instructed the battle group to mount a ground operation into the area immediately. Patrols inserted on 16 December generated enemy early warning system hits, and enemy movements were observed by aerial systems but not engaged so that they could be mapped and assessed. One patrol ambushed an enemy dig team, killing them all.[195] The following night, a B-1B bomber using its surveillance systems spotted another dig team on Highway 1 and, coordinating with the battle group command post via the Rover system, engaged and killed them.[196] The battle group's QRF exploited the site, and while picking up the pieces of the dig team and its equipment, noticed that the anti-IED grate had been removed and re-cemented in.[197]

Working around the clock, the intelligence community determined by 16 December that Commander Shair Sahib and his IED network were responsible for both the 5 and 13 December attacks.[198] In some cases, local nationals came forward and reported on the network because they understood how angry the Canadians were and feared Canadian retaliation that would produce damage to the infrastructure, including their fields.[199]

Operation PANCAR [Claw] was swiftly war-gamed and launched. N Company, plus an Afghan infantry company with Canadian mentors, focused on three objective areas in Senjaray, while M Company with an Afghan company and Canadian mentors went into the Salavat area. Special Operations TF 71 and its accompanying Afghan National Army Commandos went into an operations box encompassing Chalghowr and Zalakhan (Sperwer TUAVs provided coverage for the duration of PANCAR: poor weather limited ScanEagle SUAV use but the more robust Sperwer TUAV was still able to handle the deteriorating conditions).[200]

The four companies deployed without incident on the morning of 18 December. N Company cleared a number of "compounds of interest," where they found a man who claimed to be a National Directorate of Security agent from Dand chained up and imprisoned. They also found ten sets of blood-stained Afghan police uniforms. Several piles of unexploded munitions that were in the process of being reused as IEDs were found. M Company uncovered a small number of weapons but the real haul was 10 million Taliban-era Afghanis (currency), plus medical supplies. They also found night letters, phone sim cards and confessions of "complicity" with the government forces written by local people. X-rays of wounded Taliban fighters were also found with the medical stash

(of course, the only X-ray machines in the region were at the Role 3 on KAF and the Red Cross-controlled Mirwais Hospital in the city). TF 71 uncovered 2.5 tonnes of hashish piled up in the Chalghowr schoolhouse classrooms.[201]

ISTAR coverage of Operation PANCAR noted that the enemy knew ahead of time that M Company was on its way to the Salavat area. The enemy also tried to emplace IEDs in front of N Company as it manoeuvred, but were frustrated in their attempts because of the company's unpredictable movement. The ASIC noted that the enemy "exhibited discipline," and blended with and then disappeared into the civilian population. ISTAR tracked what the ASIC believed to be "a well-defined chain of command," which was also revealed by the operation, and a link analysis showed Commander Shair Sahib figured prominently in all of these interactions, as did senior Zharey commander, Sadiq Agha. The hunt intensified as more resources were moved to track them. Sahib was trying to preserve as much of his IED capability as possible. This involved moving components out of the way of searches and activating newly trained IED personnel. He was also short of materials and tried to get them from a source in Maywand. Every time he contacted these organizations and personnel, he added to the ASIC's body of knowledge.[202]

The first real contact of Operation PANCAR took place on 20 December, nearly two days into the operation. M Company came under small-arms fire so they called in a smoke mission to screen and withdrew. Then the snipers, who had been in positions on top of Nowruz Ghar, came under contact while exfiltrating. A QRF arrived and extracted them.[203]

TF Kandahar believed that they succeeded in temporarily disrupting Sahib's IED operations with Operation PANCAR. ISTAR reportage suggested that the enemy leadership left Senjaray, leaving Commander Toor Jan behind to run things. The nagging belief that they had prior warning of Operation PANCAR persisted at TF Kandahar. Then information came in that Sahib was told by Quetta-based Taliban leaders to report back to Waziristan. Canadian analysts were mystified and noted that this development "adds one more level of complexity to this commander."[204] Commander Agha was also ordered out and told to report to Quetta. A lower-level commander in Senjaray was also given a list of 12 people who informed on Taliban forces during Operation PANCAR and was told to deal with them.[205]

The insurgents believed—and told each other—that the latest operation was just a sweep, like they had seen before. They did not anticipate Operation JAKAR, which followed on the heels of PANCAR. JAKAR would establish permanent Afghan army presence in Senjaray with a platoon-sized strong point. Construction engineers moved in to survey the area around Haji Lala's ineffective police compound, protected by N Company. The insurgent response was to call up IED facilitator Commander Khan Aka in Nahlgam and have him infiltrate IED components into Senjaray.[206]

On Christmas Eve, Canadian ISTAR resources picked up Sahib while he was on the move in Maywand. An airstrike was ordered up but at the last minute the weapons controller aborted the mission and missed the targeted vehicle. The occupants, including Sahib, "bombshelled" from the strike site. A British SOF team that was in the area was able to round up seven insurgents, but Sahib was not among them. His trail was picked up on Christmas Day. He was located in a compound in Hasanabad village in Maywand. Canadian SOF was prosecuting another target at the time and handed off to SOF TF 373, who promptly raided this compound and killed Sahib and nine other insurgents. Those other insurgents were assessed to be up and coming enemy leaders in Maywand, so the effect of this strike had significant impact across the enemy command structure in the TF Kandahar area of operation. The ASIC established the existence and locations of other enemy leaders associated with Sahib and the hunting continued.[207]

Arghandab and Lower Shah Wali Kot Operations, November–December 2008

The possibility that more American forces would be assigned to Kandahar Province after the November 2008 American election led to a reassessment of Arghandab District at TF Kandahar. The American Police Mentoring Teams were ordered through their chain of command to enter and independently assess Arghandab District, sometimes even without coordination with Canadian forces. As a result, the decision was made to maintain Maj Tremblay's Recce Squadron in its economy of force role in Arghandab and Shah Wali Kot, and not commit further Canadian resources to the district other than ongoing CIMIC and PRT development activities.[208]

Recce Squadron's war in Arghandab District dramatically heated up in November. A 50-man insurgent force entered the district in the first week of the month and initiated a multifaceted campaign that was clearly designed to disrupt coalition reconstruction activities and reduce security but not occupy terrain. There were three abductions of civilians and a pair of IED strikes against the Arghandab police force, plus a flurry of night letters. Rockets and a truck-mounted recoilless rifle were used on two occasions to keep FOB Frontenac alerted and pinned down, and on one occasion the insurgents ambushed a Canadian combat logistics patrol. OH-58D helicopters that were escorting the patrol took out the enemy force and no Canadian casualties were generated.[209] (See Figure 4-17.)

Recce Squadron responded with a series of aggressive patrols designed to reassert security for the wavering population in the affected part of the district. A deliberate operation, Operation CANCA, resulted in the uncovering of two substantial weapons caches, including one with IED components, and this temporarily disrupted enemy operations. At the same time, 4th Kandak was trying to establish Patrol Base Arghandab

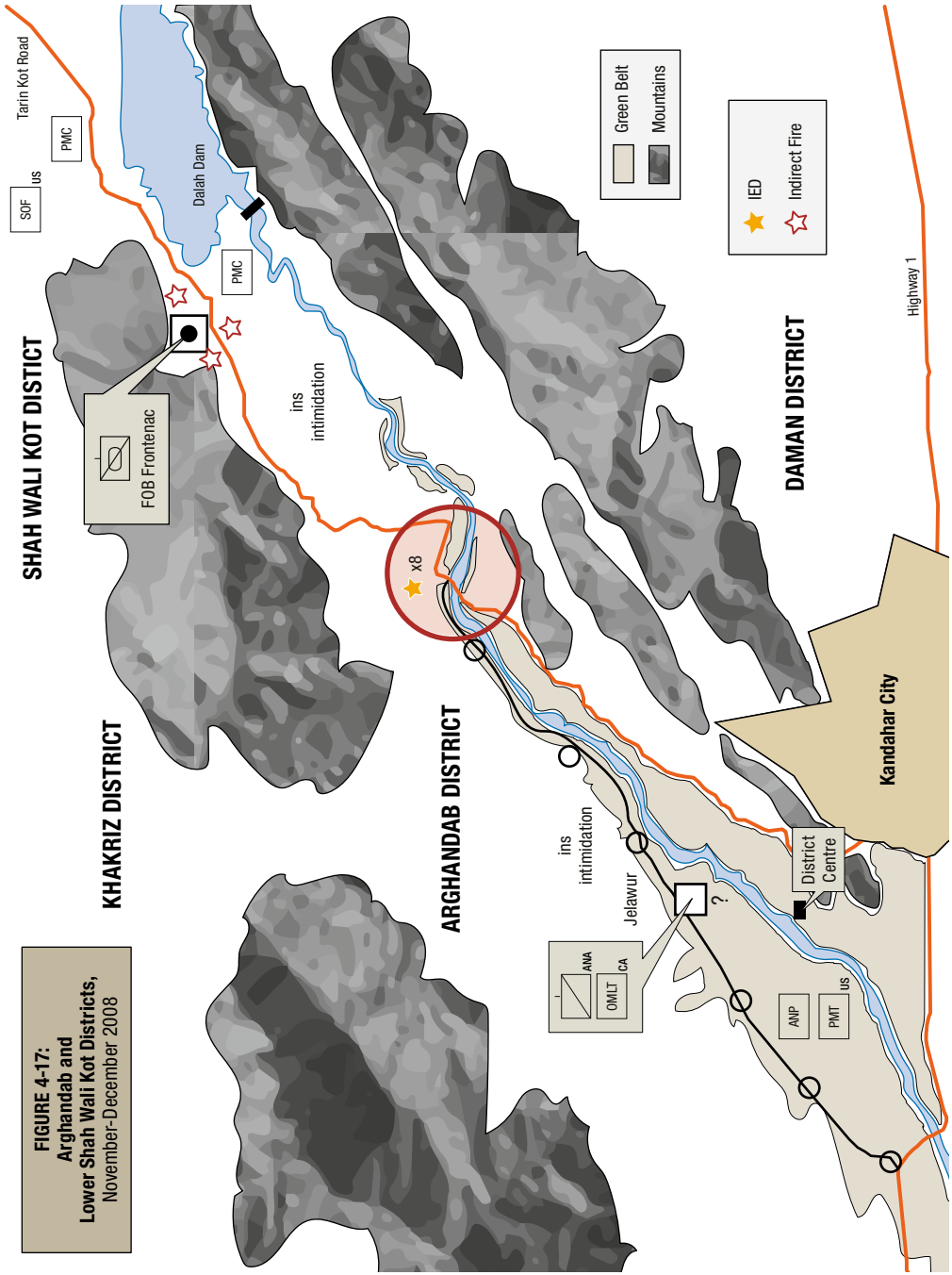


FIGURE 4-17:
Arghandab and
Lower Shah Wali Kot Districts,
November-December 2008

Figure 4-17: Arghandab and Lower Shah Wali Kot Districts, November-December 2008

near Jelawur, to house a 122mm gun battery and their Recon Company. Encouraged by Canadian mentors, 1-205 Brigade deployed their own engineering resources and contracted civilian construction to build the strong point. The day after shovels went into the ground, work was halted due to a land claims issue. This was not resolved in November and the equipment sat idle. 4th Kandak had to operate from a temporary base south of Jelawur which limited their ability to keep an eye on the Taliban-sympathetic town's population.[210]

Recce Squadron's successes resulted in serious pushback by the insurgent force as November progressed. By the end of the month, Recce Squadron endured seven IED strikes against their vehicles, producing 22 Canadian wounded and several wrecked vehicles. Many of these vehicle losses were catastrophic kills. Requests to deploy an EROC team were turned down: Recce Squadron was economy of effort and the main effort lay elsewhere.[211]

Isolated on all fronts, Maj Tremblay and Recce Squadron, assisted by a small combat engineer section led by Sgt Darrell Spence, conducted their own post-blast analysis of the attacks. When examined further, the conclusion was that the blasts were so large because the insurgent IED makers had nearly unlimited access to a particular type of fertilizer. This material, as it turned out, was paid for using CIDA money and distributed by their arm's-length contractors as part of the alternative livelihoods wheat-growing programme. Knowing what to look for, Recce Squadron uncovered and confiscated these stockpiles when they found them.[212]

By December, enemy activity dropped off to include a handful of night letters, a rocket "stonk" against FOB Frontenac and the kidnapping of a Dahla Dam construction worker. Recce Squadron shifted operations to conduct a series of disruption patrols north of the dam project.[213]

The future of Arghandab was still up in the air. It was by no means secure. The district leader, Ghulam Faruq, told the PRT that he was tired because he "had to move around the district to avoid a group of 50-60 insurgents" while going about his business. He expressed concerns to the CIMIC and CIDA representatives that the province-wide wheat seed distribution project was flawed in that "a great deal of seed was being given to districts where the [Afghan government] had very little or no control." Faruq explained to the Canadians that the non-governmental organizations undermined government authority in this way. Furthermore, why were the Canadians not looking at what went on in the mosques? According to Faruq, "The Taliban then takes the donations in the mosque for themselves."[214] As for the police, only 15 arrived to replace Zmaray Khan's police as they went off to be "Focused District Developed" at the Regional Training Center.[215] At best, Recce Squadron and the sub-units from 4th Kandak could disrupt enemy activities on a limited basis, as they stumbled across them. Shah Wali Kot was effectively already lost and Arghandab remained a district on the brink as Canadian activity increasingly focused on Zharey District hunting down Commander Sahib and his associates. Recce Squadron continued its lonely and dangerous economy of effort operations.

Dand District Operations, September–December 2008

If any district looked like it was self-securing at this time, it was Dand District, led by Ahmadullah Nazak. The Barakzai-dominated district was productive and by this time required minimal visitation by the PRT CIMIC team.[216] Enemy activity was limited to the southwest part of the district abutting Panjwayi and in the Belanday "seam" between Kandahar City, Panjwayi and Dand. Dand was protected by its own police augmented with 02 Battalion, which was in effect a Governor-controlled militia whose future was uncertain after the departure of Asadullah Khalid. From September to December 2008, violence was limited to five events, three of which were assassination attempts against Nazak, the other an IED, which killed four police in October, and the kidnapping of a shura member.[217] Indeed, the third attempt to kill the district leader resulted in a Dand District police operation that tracked down the entire suicide IED network involved and led to the apprehension of nine more teenaged suicide bombers, with minimal coalition involvement. Canadian analysis concluded that "The prompt and professional response of ANSF to this incident… demonstrates the positive progress being made…"[218]

Maywand District Operations, November–December 2008

2-2 Infantry and the Canadian CIMIC team significantly expanded operations in Maywand throughout November and December. The framework for operations in the district consisted of Strong Point Pegasus on Highway 1 containing an Afghan army company; FOB Ramrod, the main base for 2-2 Infantry headquarters and two infantry companies; and FOB Hutal, which had two infantry companies, the Police Mentoring Team and CIMIC. 2-2 Infantry also received two new organizations: there was now a Joint District Coordination Centre, which was set up along the same lines as the ones in Zharey, Panjwayi and Spin Boldak, and the Human Terrain Team. Consisting of five civilian personnel, the Human Terrain Team's task was to collect social data to support the battalion and was the field equivalent of the Canadian "White SA" team at TF Kandahar.[219]

LTC Hurlbut mounted an aggressive patrolling schedule with his companies. Almost all of these were dismounted patrols in the communities all along Highway 1 and were accompanied by Canadian CIMIC when possible. From time to time, 2-2 Infantry surged into Band-e Timor (Operation JOSH KARAY) as part of a disruptive "manoeuvre-to-collect" effort. Hand-launched MQ-11 Raven UAVs were used to watch for enemy dig teams on the highway and, in a number of cases, follow-up patrols made IED finds the next morning. For the most part, Maywand was relatively quiet throughout November with very few incidents reported to TF Kandahar. The enemy's early warning system noticeably improved part way through the month, and the accuracy and scope of their reportage expanded significantly, which was cause for concern.[220]

Tragically, Human Terrain Team anthropologist Paula Lloyd was set afire by an Afghan during an assessment patrol in the Band-e Timor area. Her bodyguard gunned down the perpetrator but Lloyd later succumbed to her wounds.[221]

The Canadian CIMIC team focused on working with the district leader Haji Mullah Mohammad Massoud on the wheat seed issue. CIDA, USAID and the Afghan Department of Agriculture were in the process of mounting a province-wide programme to distribute the seed so that it could act as an alternate crop in poppy-laden districts. There were substantial delays in the programme, which reduced government credibility with the population who had been promised the seed publicly. Time was growing short and the pressure was on. CIMIC identified the remnants of the National Solidarity Programme structure in Maywand and found that there was a Community Development Council coordinator. The district leader suggested that village elders handle the distribution: he wanted nothing to do with it. And there were good reasons for him not to. Afghan counternarcotics police arrived in the district and informed the Canadians that the district leader was taking money from drug distributors in Hutal bazaar so the police would not harass them. Being overtly identified with any counternarcotics effort, including agricultural livelihoods, could be detrimental to his health. Indeed,

> It is felt that the arrival of this unit is a very positive step towards getting the area stabilized and moving in a positive direction. However, as the drug trade is highly integrated into the economy of this area, it is predicted that the level of hostile kinetic activity will increase significantly. Additionally, given the pervasive and multifaceted nature of the district leader's apparent corrupt nature, it is fairly difficult to promote the idea that ISAF is working for the "legitimate" Government of Afghanistan in this area.[222]

In a nutshell, that was the problem in Kandahar Province. The district leader's son disappeared after wheat seed distribution was authorized.[223]

The November status quo continued into December. After some deliberation between 2-2 Infantry and TF Kandahar, the decision was made to establish a company-sized combat outpost on the Zharey–Maywand border south of Highway 1. The thinking was that COP Terminator, combined with the effects of strong points Ghundy Ghar and Mushan, would have a detrimental effect on the enemy's ability to resupply Zharey and Panjwayi via Band-e Timor and Helmand. Operation KIYAMAT RAZ went in on 14 December to disrupt Band-e Timor, while construction started on COP Terminator. There was some resistance but, more importantly, 2-2 Infantry flushed out a Taliban commander and his staff. An MQ-1 Predator strike with Hellfire killed or wounded this command team, and the Taliban leader later died of his wounds.[224]

Despite his involvement in illicit activities, Haji Massoud was supportive of the coalition effort in other areas. When TF 373 killed Commander Sahib at the end of December in Hasanabad, another Taliban leader arrived to agitate the population. Rioting started and threatened to engulf other parts of the district. PSYOPS was able to convince the district leader to go on the radio and calm the situation down. This was successful and the enemy information operations offensive evaporated overnight.[225]

Introducing the Air Wing

The idea of having a Canadian air force contribution to the mission in Afghanistan was reactivated after the Manley Report. The details of how the Canadian Forces moved from the Manley Report to deploying an Air Wing in Kandahar lie outside the parameters of this history, as do the details of airframe procurement, but the need for an air advisor at TF Kandahar and a coordinator for airspace management was recognized back in 2007. By late 2007, there was a four-man team in the Provincial Operations Centre. After the Manley Report, the decision was taken by the Canadian government to acquire: ScanEagle SUAVs; a medium-weight UAV to replace the Sperwer TUAVs; and transport helicopters. There were already CC-130 transports available for in-theatre movements,

Photo Credit: Author

After some delay, the decision was made to deploy CH-146 Griffon helicopters to Afghanistan. These multi-role machines came equipped with sensor systems, defensive suites, and machine guns.

Photo Credit: DND AR2008-A036-03

Rented from Israel, the CU-170 Heron replaced the CU-161 TUAV in 2009. In addition to its electro-optical systems, the Heron carried a robust electronic warfare and collection package that dramatically increased Canadian capabilities in southern Afghanistan.

and Canada was exploring contract helicopter transport. The command and support elements for such a force could become problematic for TF Kandahar so the Chief of the Air Staff LGen Watt, LGen Andy Leslie and CEFCOM commander LGen Mike Gauthier agreed to form an Air Wing and group all Canadian air assets into it.[226] Col Chris Coates was selected to stand for the Air Wing and took command of it on 6 December 2008.

A perplexing problem was the lack of a Canadian armed escort helicopter. Transport machines were not permitted to fly unescorted in Afghanistan, so a request went out from Canada to a variety of NATO allies in Europe to see if they would be willing to provide armed helicopters for this role. Despite the fact that continental European NATO countries operated more than an estimated 250 attack helicopters and were not at war elsewhere, none were willing to provide six or eight aircraft to assist Canada. This led to dusting off existing plans to arm the CH-146 Griffon with something larger and more capable than a 5.56mm or 7.62mm machine gun on a pedestal mount.[227] The CH-146 Griffons were known to be "power-limited" but engineers at 1 Canadian Air Division figured out how to tweak the engine software on the airframes to gain better performance in the tough Afghan environment.[228]

Photo Credit: Author

Eventually, the CH-146 Griffons were equipped with Dillon Gatling guns and were manned by reservist infantrymen. These fearsome weapons were given the names of female Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan.

Airframes and personnel arrived in late November and mid-December 2008. Six CH-146 Griffons were flown in on 22 December, followed by a pair of CH-147D Chinooks on 25 December. Three more Chinooks arrived on 29 December. The Chinooks were handed over from American sources in Afghanistan and Canadian crews trained alongside American crews in-theatre.[229]

By this time, six Mi-8 HIP transport helicopters were already supporting Canadian operations in Afghanistan. SkyLink won the bid to supply these machines, flown by Moldovan and Kyrgyz pilots, with the first missions to resupply Canadian forward operating bases flown in November. The sight of Canadian markings on former Soviet aircraft was somewhat jarring at first to some.[230]

The Canadian government decided, for a variety of questionable reasons, not to acquire an armed UAV like MQ-1 or MQ-9. Instead, the government decided to rent a trio of unarmed Heron UAVs from Israel. Designated CU-170, the Herons had a variety of electro-optical and electronic warfare sensors. They arrived in December with the first test flight conducted on 2 January 2009. The Sperwer TUAVs continued to soldier on, as it were, alongside the increased size of the ScanEagle fleet of ten.[231] The Air Wing was well on its way to achieving an operational posture as 2009 dawned.

Governance

Governance matters affecting Canadian operations in Kandahar in late 2008 broke down into three areas: policing, voter registration in preparation for the planned 2009 elections, and Governor–TF Kandahar relations. On the policing front, BGen Thompson and LCol Woodworth generated significantly more coordination to get a grip on the policing "Tower of Babel." These mechanisms consisted of a series of regular meetings to get all players around one table at the same time. There was a Focused District Development Steering Committee, which included all the relevant Canadian, American and Afghan players: TF Kandahar, Afghan Regional Security Integration Command-South, Regional Command (South), the U.S. Police Mentoring Team, and Regional Police Advisory Command. The PRT formed a Police Coordination Cell, which had CIVPOL, Police Mentoring Teams, the P-OMLT, and Afghan Ministry of the Interior representatives. For the most part, these organizations were designed to get all of the Western policing organizations together on the same sheet of music before interacting with their Afghan counterparts.[232]

The current Kandahar Province police chief, Brigadier-General Matiullah Qati, was mentored by American Colonel Peter Savage. In terms of the Kandahar power structure, Matiullah was assessed as a man put in place to placate the Barakzai, who were feeling marginalized, and the Alikozai, who were, in fact, already marginalized. Matiullah was Achakzai and was linked to the Sherzais.[233] The Popalzai power structure, however,

held the reigns at the regional policing level in the personage of Abdullah Khan, the second-in-command of the Maywand Regional Police Headquarters who was directly linked to Ahmad Wali Karzai. The Raufi-Matiullah combination was thus balanced by the Karzai-Abdullah Khan combination. The Alikozais were by now subordinated to the Popalzais, so by late 2008 there were two tribally based loci of power in the province, not three. It was only a matter of time before there was a struggle between the two.

These realities of power did not stop voter registration process planning. The 2009 elections were crucial: they were the first since 2004 and would be a measurement of how much legitimacy the Karzai government held, which, in turn, underpinned the entire counter-insurgency effort in the country, let alone in Kandahar. Improper voter registration or undue enemy interference with Voter Registration and Election operations could seriously skew the results. BGen Thompson was well aware of the stakes and was concerned about the effects of the Popalzai power structure interfering with the process or results and giving the enemy what they needed on a silver platter.[234]

The Canadian role in the voter registration security plan was deliberately kept in the background to get the Afghan forces working together. BGen Thompson and his staff, as well as the Canadian staff at the provincial coordination centre, facilitated meetings between the police, National Directorate of Security, army, the Governor, and the Independent Election Commission representatives (CIDA also funded the commission through its Kabul programming). Maj Fraser Auld, a TF Kandahar planner, had experience with the 2005 elections and was able to bring that to bear on the problems. There would be 40 Voters Registration Centres, with three rings of security: police, then army, then ISAF. Each district would form a QRF to respond to attacks against Voters Registration Centres in their area of operation. Afghan National Army kandaks were also on call to support. TF Kandahar was prepared to allow its contracted Mi-8 helicopters to fly forces wherever they were required. Canadian PSYOPS, CIMIC and the PRT helped get the message out at the district and community levels and the message was: "voting is a weapon against the Taliban." TF Kandahar also crafted the SHAHI TANDAR series of operations to specifically disrupt enemy activity in a given area prior to voter registration commencing. These plans were pushed to the battle group.[235]

Unfortunately, Governor Raufi publicly embarrassed his former subordinate General Bashir at a provincial security meeting, which likely led to Afghan army withdrawal from the vital provincial coordination centre at the Governor's Palace. This attenuated voter registration security planning for some time.[236]

The situation got worse. The idea of a large 600- to 1,000-man tribal jirga for Kandahar Province was mooted, partly in order to appeal to the sub-district and community elders. Ahmad Wali Karzai embraced the idea and wanted to lead the event with 50 of his hand-picked people. Raufi disagreed and thought this was a means to bypass the

provincial council. As a result, the two men stopped speaking to each other. BGen Denis Thompson and the Representative of Canada in Kandahar Elissa Golberg got the two men together on 4 December, where Thompson noted that it was "like being a marriage counsellor." Raufi and Karzai got into a shouting match, with Raufi yelling "Who is the Governor?" at Karzai. Karzai stormed out. Thirty minutes later, Thompson got a phone call telling him President Karzai fired Governor Raufi. Thompson was told before the Canadian ambassador or the Representative of Canada in Kandahar, which generated bad blood once again between the Army and the OGDs.[237] Raufi was out, but who was in?

The Raufi-Karzai affair collaterally unmasked one of the primary motivations for impediments to development in Kandahar. A very senior member of the government connected to Ahmad Wali Karzai did not, in fact, want the National Solidarity Programme development committee-assembly-council system to work at all. In effect, empowering local communities had adverse effects: the tribal leaders in the province believed that they were no longer in charge and, as a result, those in power could not financially benefit directly from the process.[238] With Raufi in charge, the system had a chance to work. With Raufi gone, there was serious concern that there would be a slide back to the methodologies employed by Asadullah Khalid. The provincial coordination centre staff were told by a senior Afghan that the "Alikozai tribal leader Kalimullah and the entire Alikozai tribe are reportedly very disappointed by the president's decision to replace Raufi who they claim 'was a good guy' who 'wanted to do things.'"[239]

The new governor was Tooryalai Wessa, who arrived in Kandahar in a rumpled suit with three-days change of clothes and a "deer-in-the-headlights" look. Thompson believed Wessa, a boyhood friend of both Hamid and Qayyum Karzai, was the perfect candidate: "When he fucks up, he's Canadian. When he succeeds, he's Afghan."[240] As for Wessa's affiliations and tribal loyalties, TF Kandahar reported that "Wessa is firmly in the Karzai camp and will not challenge AWK."[241]

OMLT Operations in Helmand: December 2008–January 2009

Once again, 2nd (Strike) Kandak was called out to Helmand Province by 205 Corps to assist with ongoing operations. This had detrimental effects on voter registration security operations in the kandak's area of operation in Kandahar Province.[242] Capt Sean French led the Canadian mentor teams as they linked up with 200 Afghan National Army soldiers and deployed west on 9 January. On arrival at the British facilities near Gereshk, they learned that they were part of a 3-205 Brigade-led operation designed to clear west down the Nahr-e Bughra Canal to the Spin Masjid community to "mitigate insurgent influence on Highway 1, draw insurgent attention away from Lashkar Gah, and reinforce the Afghan National Police throughout the area of operations."[243] (See Figure 4-18.)

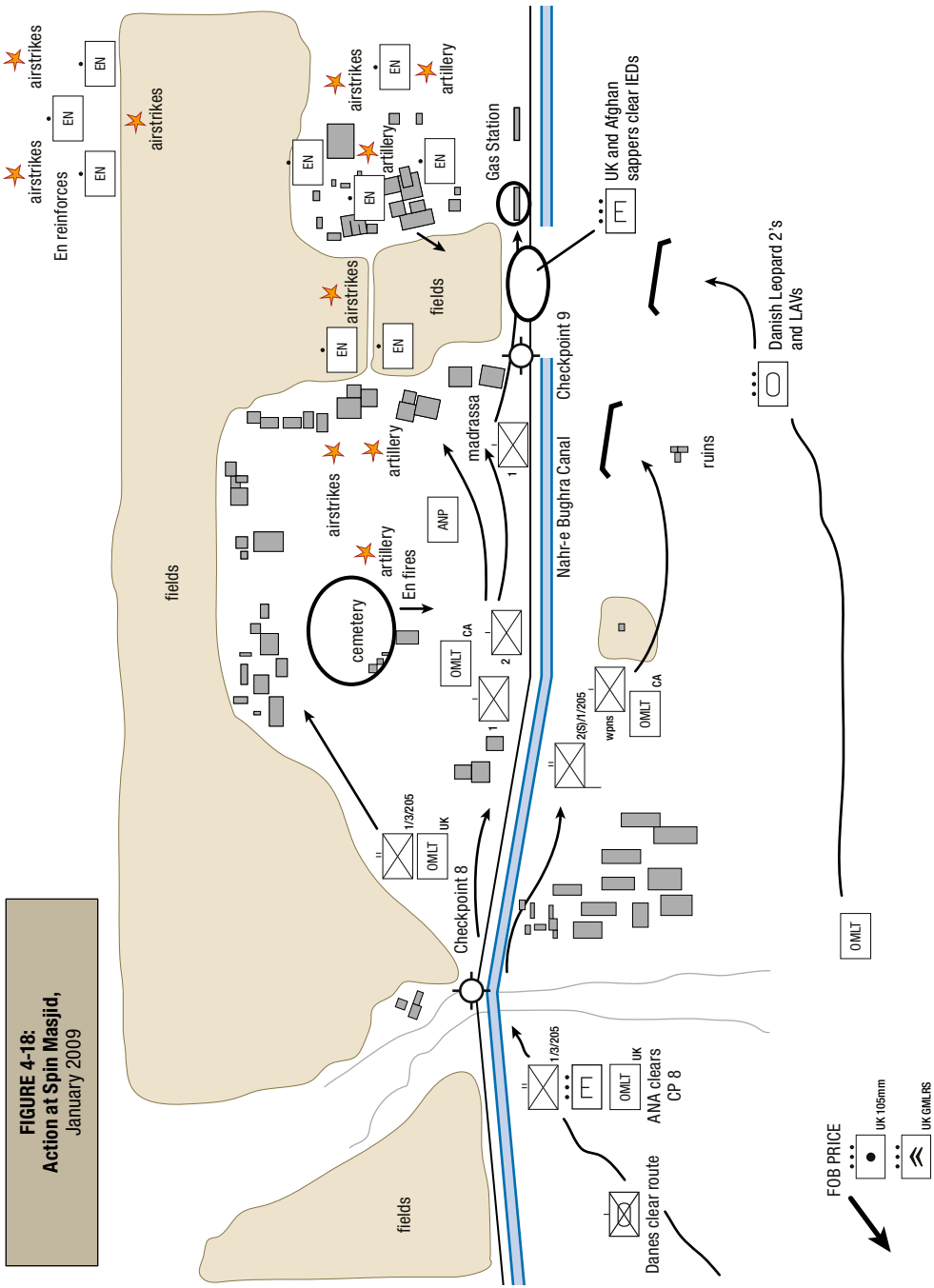


Figure 4-18: Action at Spin Masjid, January 2009

The larger aspects of the operation were not clear to the Canadian mentors: they focused on the tactical issues confronting them and 2nd (Strike) Kandak. It was a brigade-sized operation involving another kandak from 3-205 Brigade, British mentors, Danish tank support and British artillery. The immediate objective was to retake several Afghan police checkpoints between Gereshk and Spin Masjid, one of two major crossing points on the canal between the capital and Gereshk, and repopulate them after the Afghan engineers cleared and rebuilt them. Clearly, the enemy held sway in the area and had driven off the police.

The scheme of manoeuvre had a Danish armoured unit clear the route from FOB Price to the bridge. 1st Kandak, 3-205 Brigade would seize the bridge and continue south. 2nd (Strike) Kandak was to move to the bridge, send one company to the southern side of canal and, with the other company moving in parallel to the north, sweep west. Danish Leopard 2 tanks would screen to the north and provide support as required. This is essentially what happened on the first day of the operation. As 2nd (Strike) Kandak moved west, however, they were engaged from compound complexes along the way and had to call in artillery support. Eventually, they reached Spin Masjid and were engaged by significant enemy forces ensconced in compounds to the south and west. The company north of the canal ran into IEDs, one of which seriously wounded an Afghan officer while he was conducting ablutions for prayers late in the day. OMLT medics did their best to keep him alive but he succumbed to multiple traumatic amputations and died.

The ability of the OMLT to act as a facilitator for coalition close air and artillery support and to direct precision strikes paid off as the firefight escalated. Numerous strikes were delivered to enemy reinforcements as they moved north to engage the Afghan army and police forces. Similarly, the night vision optics in the RG-31s remote weapons system was a force multiplier in this action as the Afghans had no night vision capability at this time at all.

A significant problem were the IEDs uncovered at the sites of the destroyed police checkpoints. One excavator was destroyed, leaving the Afghan engineers unable to conduct a complete clearance of the sites. The enemy continued to reinforce, so the kandak commander decided to move across the wadi to a gas station and give his forces more room to fire at them. The wadi, as it turned out, was strewn with IEDs. Taking no casualties, the Afghans, Canadians and, eventually, a British fire control team, made it to the gas station, but they were effectively marooned until engineers could move forward to clear the wadi. The "defence of the gas station" lasted two days and nights. Six Canadian mentors and a pair of British forward observation officers, plus a platoon of Afghans, rained fire down on an enemy that was significantly agitated and determined to wipe out the small force. Fire from British guided MLRS rockets, 105mm guns and American B-1B bombers

were all directed onto enemy sections that had been flushed out with accurate fire from Canadian machine guns, the RG-31 remote weapons system and the Afghan infantry. Afghan engineers, using primitive equipment, essentially Second World War era gear and methods, were eventually able to clear lanes to the gas station positions so they could be resupplied.

The inability of the 3-205 Brigade forces to reconstruct and then man the checkpoints, coupled with the enemy deciding to quit the field and disperse south resulted in the withdrawal and redeployment of 2nd (Strike) Kandak and its mentors to FOB Price and then Kandahar Province. Spin Masjid was a brave fight by the OMLT and their counterparts resulting in substantial enemy casualties, but its larger operational-level effects were questionable. It was a diversion from Canadian priorities in Kandahar but demonstrated for all to see how well the Canadian-Afghan relationship worked within 2nd (Strike) Kandak.

Kandahar City Operations, January 2009

The insurgent intimidation campaign in Kandahar City slackened off toward the end of January and targeting shifted to the voter registration process instead of the police and the government bureaucracy. This permitted the PRT to focus on municipal issues. CIMIC and CIDA worked together to build relationships with UNAMA, UN HABITAT, USAID and Mayor Hamidi. Generally, the consensus was that there was a lack of coordination capacity for the Mayor, who was as overwhelmed as provincial governors had been in the past. Hamidi made headway on garbage collection, something not to be sneered at due to the prevalence of disease and contaminated water supplies, and his right-hand man, the city engineer, knew what needed to be done but lacked the staff. Tax collection was underway, another Hamidi initiative that was crucial to any infrastructure and bureaucratic developments. CIMIC teams continued to support where they could.[244]

A Loosening Grip on Arghandab and Lower Shah Wali Kot Districts, January 2009

Maj Tremblay and Recce Squadron continued economy of effort operations in Arghandab into the new year. By this time, more enemy IED cells were attracted to Arghandab, some of them migrating north from Senjaray. This included suicide bombers. On New Year's Day, a Canadian mounted patrol on Route Oregon engaged a car that would not respond to direction, shot the driver and found three 250-pound bombs in the vehicle. The large size of this particular weapon was of some concern.[245]

The Afghan grip on the district was slipping. The district leader, it turned out, resigned but did not bother to tell anyone. And, to make matters worse, a prominent stabilizing factor in the district, a former Mujahideen shura elder, passed away of natural causes.

There was, once again, a serious leadership vacuum in Arghandab. Kalimullah was nowhere on the scene. The district shura was all but dissolved. Zmaray Khan was away with his police while about 100 ANCOP and another 80 augmentees manned the police checkpoints. The long-standing desire to have a strong point in Jelawur was suddenly canceled by the Afghans. Bewildered, Recce Squadron and the police continued to provide the best security presence they could, given the circumstances. Then they got hit again. A large IED took out a police patrol on 6 January, killing two and wounding five police officers. Recce Squadron was hit on 7 January; this IED took out a Coyote, wounded three Canadians, and killed Tpr Brian Good. Another Coyote struck an IED two days later: there were no casualties but the vehicle was a mobility kill. There was a pair of IED attacks against police targets on 17 January, but the worst was yet to come. On 24 January, 50 insurgents dressed in Afghan army uniforms and driving Afghan army Ranger trucks approached the police checkpoint near Jelawur and "arrested" the police. They proceeded to execute three of the officers and abducted three more. A Canadian Police Mentoring Team was sent to investigate, escorted by a recce patrol. Another Coyote struck an IED, wounding three more Canadians.

The only positive developments were a raid conducted by Recce Squadron and the police. Acting on a tip, a cordon and search operation seized a substantial cache of ammonium nitrate. And, in a related development, American SOF swooped down and prosecuted a leadership target 3 kilometres north of the district centre.[246]

TF Kandahar's assessment was pessimistic. The police were pulling back out of the small communities and into the larger population centres in the Alikozai-dominated parts of the district:

> The insurgents have been attempting to shape the Arghandab battle-space over the last two years through a campaign of intimidation aimed at obtaining control of the local population rather than their outright support…the willingness of the Arghandab acting Chief of Police to effectively cede part of the district to the insurgents will provide them with the opportunity to increase their influence in Northern Arghandab.[247]

Without police or army forces to hold, and with a dwindling number of operational vehicles and mounting personnel losses, Recce Squadron could do very little to influence events. Arghandab was in the process of being lost to the insurgency while Afghan and coalition forces surged into Helmand Province, and Canadian forces struggled in Zharey District to keep Highway 1 open for them.

Maywand District Operations, January 2009

For whatever reason, the successful special operations forces' strike at Hasanabad against Commander Sahib had significant spillover effects on the Maywand insurgency. Right after that strike, the violence level ramped up significantly throughout January. In the first week, there were three kidnapping incidents against construction crews and agricultural consultants. Another construction worker was assassinated at the controls of his bulldozer. At the same time, a series of coordinated attacks took place around the perimeter of FOB Hutal. There was also a specialist intimidation team roaming along the Maywand stretch of the Kajaki-Kandahar City power lines, beating electrical crews and beating villagers for taking wheat seed. Then on 8 January, a vehicle-borne suicide bomber detonated in the Hutal bazaar. The blast killed Sgt. Joshua Rath and Specialist Keith Essary, wounded nine other Americans from C Company, killed three Afghans and wounded 11 more. Elsewhere, the enemy reacted to the establishment of COP Terminator. Clearly, positioning American forces in this location seriously irritated the insurgents much in the same way as Strong Point Mushan did in Panjwayi. The construction team was subjected to all forms of enemy fire. The American platoons operating from the site came under attack with IEDs on three occasions. Maywand was progressively heating up and something had to be done about that, so LTC Hurlbut and LCol Barrett explored their options.

More CIMIC resources were brought to bear in Maywand in January and by this time, the Human Terrain Team had had several months to make some tentative assessments of the situation. Overall, CIMIC operators reported that

> The insurgency in Maywand was not only religious-driven, but also a political struggle of disenfranchised people. Allegedly two of the main Taliban commanders…were high-ranking military commanders during the Taliban regime. Neither of the men were included in the [Government of Afghanistan] formulation and do not feel represented by the Karzai administration….The assessment is that, on the whole, people in Maywand do not like the Taliban because they are destroying the country, but the people are very afraid of them. The Taliban have spies in almost every village and report people who are seen as cooperating with ISAF...people who went to the district centre to get wheat seed were followed home and killed by the Taliban.[248]

The population wanted more police but did not want to go to the existing government:

> It is CIMIC's assessment that the people of Maywand have more trust in the Taliban than they do in the district leader and the ANP because they are seen to be corrupt and have repeatedly abused their authority.[249]

Zharey District Operations, January 2009

In a departure from previous months, enemy activity in January focused in the Kolk–Spin Pir area, with isolated incidents in Ghundy Ghar and Lakokhel, as well as ongoing efforts to interfere with Highway 1. The battle group controlled engagement system, coupled with N Company and 1st Kandak patrolling generated results. An example of this was an engagement on 3 January. A Sperwer TUAV monitoring Highway 1 spotted a dig team. Maj Marc St-Yves, watching from the Tactical Operations Centre, authorized close air support in the form of an orbiting B-1B bomber. The first JDAM airburst did not kill the entire dig team and they ran from the site toward Kolk. An MQ-1 Predator in the area was vectored on and killed one insurgent with a Hellfire. The B-1B engaged another with a GBU-12 bomb but missed. An A-10 moved in and took him and the third emplacer out with four strafing runs. ISTAR reportage the next day confirmed seven enemy dead.[250] (See Figure 4-19.) A similar engagement using a combination of Sperwer TUAV, OH-58D helicopters, and an F-15 fighter bomber took place on 11 January.

The next day, police and Canadian mentors found an IED consisting of two jugs of homemade explosive under the asphalt and a command wire leading to an abandoned compound set up as a firing point. Another device was found on an egress route with a spider device. It was connected to yet another jug of homemade explosive. Badger AEVs were brought in to level the compound.[251]

To prove they were still in the game, the insurgents tried to rocket Ma'Sum Ghar the following night. An A Squadron tank crew spotted a team digging rockets into the ground at a known point of origin. The insurgents lit a 400 metre-long fire in order to blind the night optics on the tanks, but two 120mm rounds found their way to the enemy team, killing them. There were secondary explosions as the rockets cooked off.[252]

1st Kandak surprised their mentors with a well-structured fighting patrol south of Howz-e Madad supported by N Company and OH-58D helicopter support from TF Wings who replaced TF Eagle Assault. Though there was no contact, it was evident that 1st Kandak improved its ability to plan and mount independent operations.[253]

One problem that emerged was poor police leadership at Spin Pir. This translated into less patrolling and less influence in the area and thus increased enemy activity. On 11 January, the insurgents kidnapped four people from the area, took them to Kolk, and then hanged them in public. Two more were hanged in another village. Apparently, items like satellite phones and infrared beacons were discovered on their persons and, deemed to be spies for ISAF, they were executed. Canadian analysis was that "This recent targeting is likely a reaction to the latest successful CF direct actions against insurgent commanders and perceived enemy operational security issues."[254]

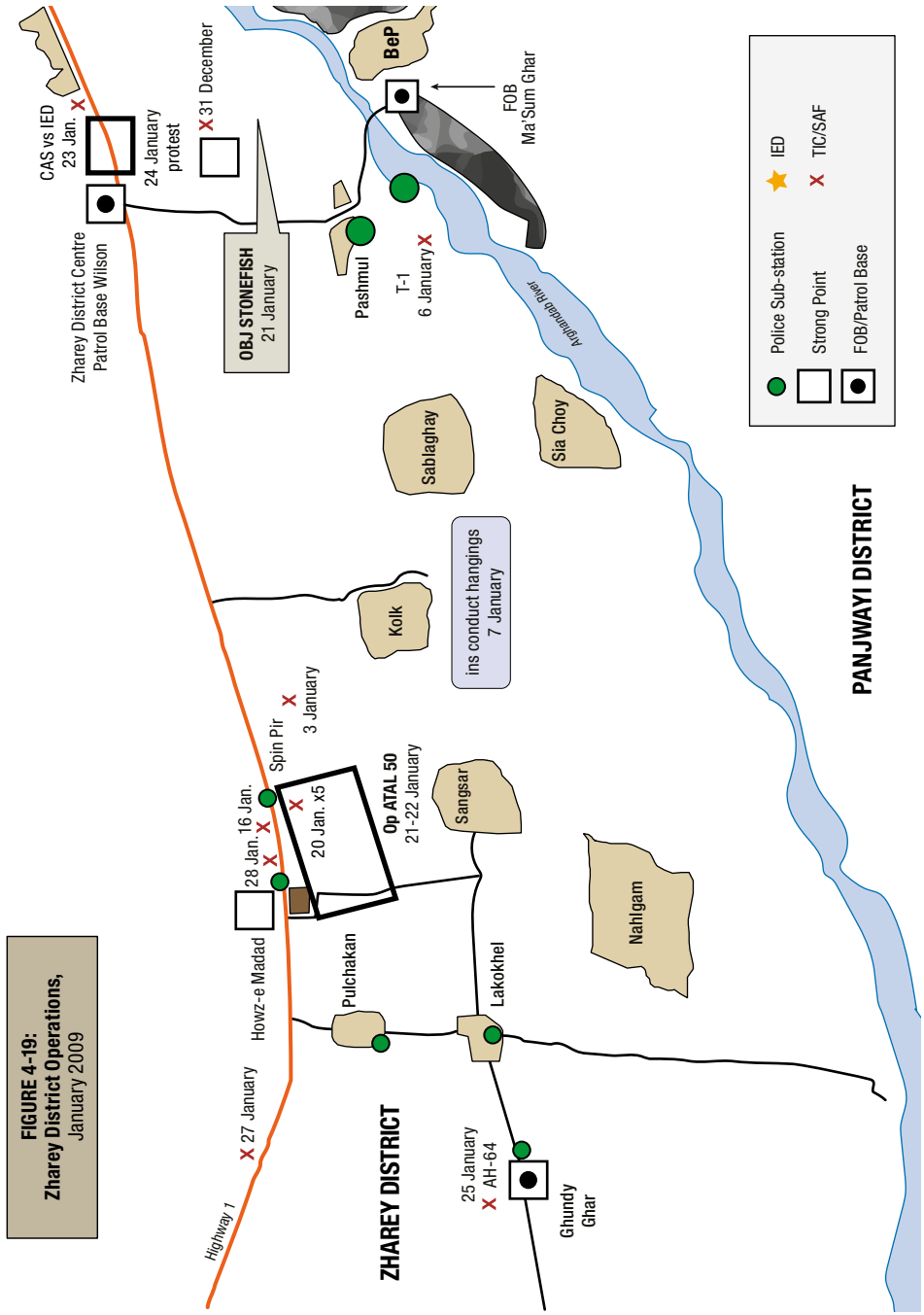


FIGURE 4-19:
Zharey District Operations,
January 2009

Figure 4-19: Zharey District Operations, January 2009

The lack of significant enemy activities resulted in a battle group assessment later in the month. It was determined that close air support strikes seriously wounded one of the few IED facilitators still left in the district and he was repatriated by the insurgent medical system back to Pakistan. The new strong point in Senjaray prompted the enemy command node to relocate from that part of the district. Tribal elders in the area now shifted back to the government camp. As a result, there were more and more weapons and IED turn-ins by local people. The police under Bismillah Khan remained problematic, however.[255]

To further reinforce Afghan presence, 1st Kandak launched Operation ATAL 50 on 20 January. This was a cordon and search effort in the triangle between Spin Pir, Lakokhel and Howz-e Madad. A Canadian LAV III platoon and a combat engineering section were attached to the kandak instead of the other way around. ATAL 50 forces came under fire on six occasions as they manoeuvred, but it was all "shoot and scoot," so much so that it was difficult to bring close air or artillery to bear on the enemy. When they could, the OMLT vectored a pair of U.S. Marine Corps F-18s onto one contact while the Canadian guns fired off 12 rounds of high explosive. During the search of one compound, it was found to be booby-trapped by the retreating enemy. The ATAL 50 forces overnighted at Spin Pir before resuming operations.[256]

That night, agitated enemy commanders who were unclear as to the scope of Operation ATAL 50, moved around and communicated. At a compound in Zharey District, special operations forces took out Mullah Abdul Rahim Akhund, the man who replaced Mullah Sahib and who played a key role in the December killings. There they found a tunnel system, which they cleared. N Company deployed to the site the next day to find scattered medical supplies and the tunnels flooded. That was not all: another SOF team engaged and killed yet another prominent enemy commander from Helmand who used Maywand as a rest and resupply area.[257]

Operation ATAL 50 wound down with limited harassing contact. A follow-on close air support engagement killed yet another dig team on the road. This resulted in remonstrations from local elders that the men killed were not insurgents, but further investigations concluded that they lifted an anti-IED culvert grate at night and were engaged in some activity under the road. That was not enough; soon Zharey police, the Afghan army and the Canadians were confronted with a large-scale demonstration of 300 people in Makuan and the Zharey District Centre. The Joint District Coordination Centre members approached the leadership and were able to convince them to disperse. P-OMLT sources noted that a HiG Mullah operating in the Senjaray area was the prime mover behind the protest, and that the crowd contained a number of insurgents with weapons and one suicide bomber. They were unable to get into or near FOB Wilson because of the police and army cordon, so they backed off.[258] BGen Thompson, concerned about these developments, held a shura in Zharey with

local power brokers. The message was delivered: you are responsible for helping ISAF with security. This was best done through communication and the Joint District Coordination Centre. Frustrated with the eastern Zharey population's shift toward the government, the insurgents resorted to a threatening "night letter" campaign from the FOB Wilson area to Senjaray.[259]

There was very little development activity, though CIMIC continued to patrol where it could and add to the PRT's knowledge of the district. In essence, it was looking better for the Canadians and Afghans in Zharey: Highway 1 was not threatened to the same extent as it had been in November and December. Enemy leadership was in serious disarray. The population was wavering toward the government. But the police were still in a poor state. The balance could tip the other way on a whim. The kandaks and the mentors continued to push out patrols and on 31 January, one such patrol was ambushed, seriously wounding an Afghan soldier, who could not make it to cover. Cpl Richard Anderson and the patrol medic tried to shift the casualty but were unable to, so they started medical assistance in the open while under fire. The patrol provided cover fire, was able to recover the three men and conducted a fighting withdrawal. Cpl Anderson was awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.

Panjwayi District Operations, January 2009

Once the decision was made to cede control of the Panjwayi West area between Sperwan Ghar and Mushan to the enemy by removing the strong points on Route Fosters West, the enemy focused their activity in and around Bazaar-e Panjwayi while maintaining pressure on Mushan and protecting his base areas south of Fosters East near Nakhonay (see Figure 4-20). Indeed, Canadian analysis in January asserted that

> Upon conclusion of CF ops in the area, the insurgents returned to exact reprisals on local nationals….the insurgents have nearly complete freedom of movement in villages that line the south or Route Fosters….ANSF can only exert influence 1 km south along Fosters…. the insurgents are able to continue to exert influence and control over the villages east of FOB Ma'Sum Ghar.[260]

M Company, operating from Sperwan Ghar, mounted a series of large patrols into the Zangabad area and continued with route security activity on Routes Brown and Fosters East in support of CMT-1. These patrols turned up little other than stockpiled drugs and were likely compromised before they were launched.

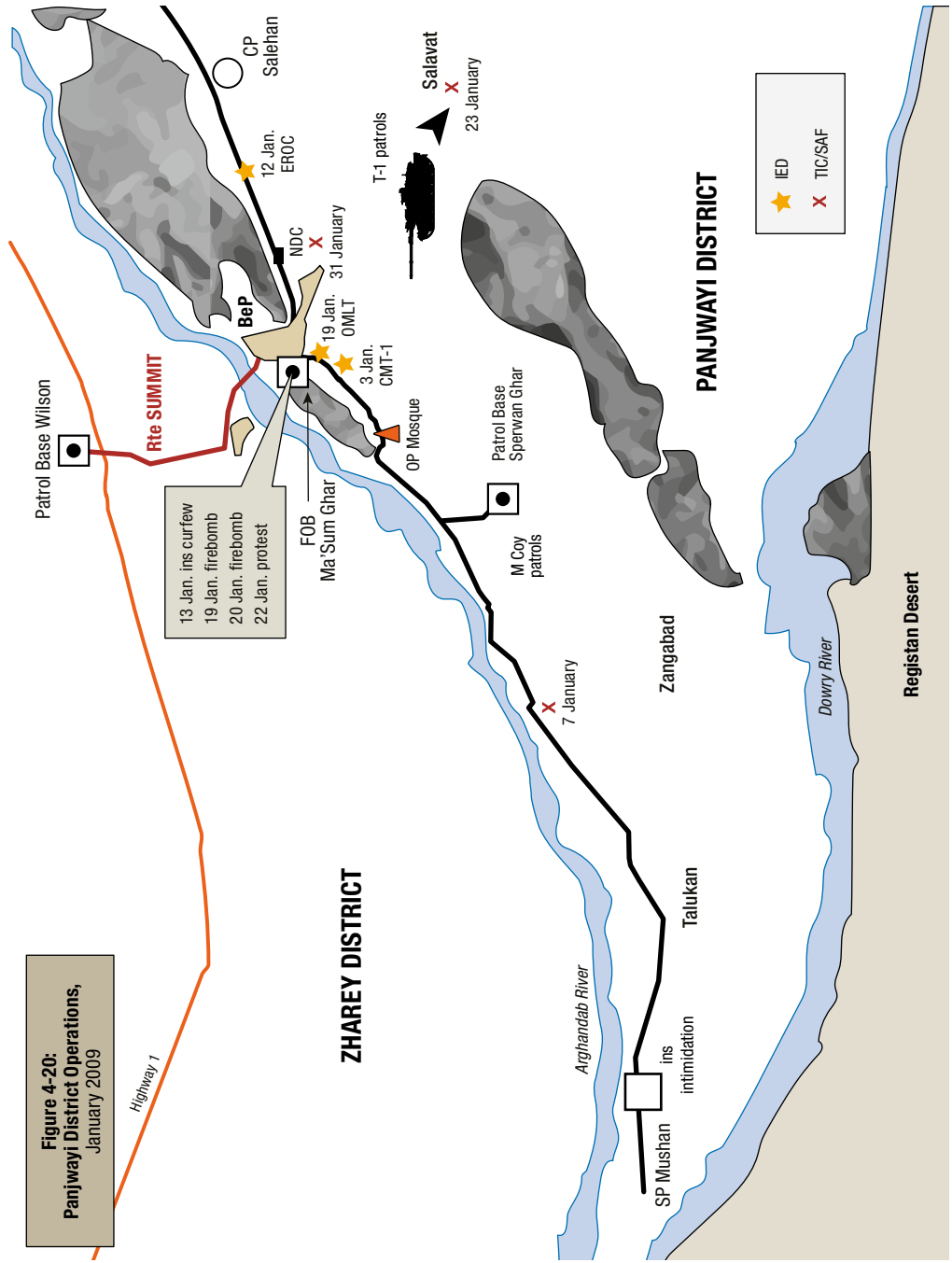


Figure 4-20: Panjwayi District Operations, January 2009

CMT-1, now augmented with Blue Hackle private security, continued with the Fosters paving project. By now, a combination of mechanical paving and manual labour superseded the original manpower-intensive paving plan. It still employed several hundred local people and the micro-economy expanded as the project inched west. CIMIC worked with CMT-1 in an effort to refurbish some of the mosques along the route but it was really personal connections between CMT-1 personnel and their communities back in Canada that brought in donations from the Toronto area to fix the problem. The synergy generated in these communities by the activities of CMT-1 was offset slightly by increased attempts to harass the project. An IED killed one worker while he was eating lunch—the IED was emplaced at a shaded area where the workers ate. On another occasion, four workers were abducted, taken to what they referred to as a "jail" near Lakokhel, beaten, their money stolen, and then released with instructions not to work on the project. From time to time, ineffective small-arms fire was directed at the project area, but CMT-1, in its TLAVs, covered the Afghan paving machines as they laid the road and verified its quality.[261]

Closer in, the Afghan police in Bazaar-e Panjwayi were subjected to firebombing attacks on two occasions, with three casualties. Right after these attacks, the insurgents declared that there was to be a curfew in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and anyone violating it would be roughed up or worse. This was a bold challenge to civil authority, right in the administrative centre of the district, and only metres away from FOB Ma'Sum Ghar with its tank run-ups. District leader Haji Baran countered with his own curfew, stating that anybody seen after dark would be considered an insurgent and dealt with. The insurgents in the town continued to focus on targeting the police: a Canadian P-OMLT member was severely wounded on one incident. Another attack, this time a suicide bomber, futilely tried to take on a group of EROC vehicles as they swept Fosters east of the town.[262]

There was, however, more to all of this than surface reporting suggests. Canadian observers of the Panjwayi situation detected that the relationship between Baran and chief of police Mohammad Naeem was problematic and that there was some connection between the increasingly violent activity in the Bazaar-e Panjwayi area and relationships between Baran, Naeem and the Taliban.

Both men interfered with the Salehan checkpoint construction job, according to the Canadians on the Specialist Engineer Team.[263] CIMIC consistently reported that the people in Panjwayi did not trust the police because they took money from the locals.[264] Naeem even tried to "shake down" an American private security contractor.[265] However, on 22 January, around 150 people launched a violent protest in Bazaar-e Panjwayi, burning tires and blocking the road. Ostensibly, this was a protest against the police, who were accused of beating local shopkeepers. Haji Baran and his security team intervened when

they saw a policeman beating a person in the bazaar, so his security team publicly beat the policeman up. The demonstration was, apparently, spontaneous, the people demanded that the Afghan National Army take over security and that Naeem be removed as police chief. However, when Naeem's side of the story was obtained, he told the P-OMLT that the demonstration only took place after he called the National Directorate of Security and told them that "Haji Baran was in fact a Taliban supporter and had orchestrated the morning's demonstration."[266] Then information was received that Haji "Dollars" Agha Lalai, who had connections with Baran, wanted Naeem fired. Another source asserted that the protest was in response to the deaths of three men whom locals said were not insurgents but were killed in an airstrike.[267] To complicate matters further, the media claimed Naeem was corrupt and stealing from the innocent in a campaign orchestrated by Baran. In other words, it was impossible to sort out exactly what was going on other than the fact that somebody was manufacturing disorder in Bazaar-e Panjwayi, disrupting governance, and generating suspicion, while others profited from the chaos.

Coincidentally, the next day, shopkeepers in Mushan reported Taliban intimidation and taxation attempts by local commanders. Instead of going to the Afghan troops at the strong point,

> The fact that the local nationals reportedly sought adjudication from the Pakistan-based Insurgent Commission vice the Government of Afghanistan or CF/ANSF stationed at SP Mushan demonstrates that local nationals have more faith in the insurgents to solve their local issues.[268]

The insurgent's new tact also included going after the education system. One school south of Three Tank Hill was taken over by the Taliban, who trashed the site, gutted the buildings and poisoned the well.[269] They forced the school in another location to become a madrassa: "When the insurgents found out about the school they beat the teachers and threatened to destroy the building unless the schooling stopped. The school subsequently moved to one of the mosques and therefore is a "madrassa"."[270]

Taken together, all of these approaches undermined any attempts at government authority in Panjwayi District. Haji Baran was barely the leader of the New District Centre, let alone Bazaar-e Panjwayi, or any other locality in the district. Without connecting projects like the Fosters paving project, the projects became local ends unto themselves to governance.

That said, Strong Point Mushan continued to hold and interfere with enemy activities despite resupply problems, the insurgency did not appear to have serious inroads in the Sperwan Ghar area, and there were no serious IED attacks on Route Fosters East or West.

Battle group and Afghan National Army sub-units generally had freedom of movement from Sperwan Ghar to Bazaar-e Panjwayi. However, that was not enough. It was at best a stalemated situation in some areas, with the enemy having control or influence over the bulk of the district.

Diverging Development: The PRT, October 2008–January 2009

By fall 2008, the combination of the organizational changes to accommodate the Representative of Canada in Kandahar and an influx of civilian staff from the OGDs involved in Kandahar operations constituted a radical departure from the past three years in matters related to development and reconstruction. It was a direct result of the strategic direction taken after the Manley Report and, consequently, was not a great surprise. It is at this point that the development narrative and the Canadian Army's narrative diverged. The centrality of the military components of the PRT and its commander in provincial-level reconstruction and development was progressively reduced by the end of 2008. It was partially replaced with the Representative of Canada in Kandahar's staff at TF Kandahar and the boosted civilian presence at the PRT. Military aspects of PRT operations reverted more and more toward CIMIC and Specialist Engineer Team operations plus the usual protected movements of the PRT civilians. For example, the pioneering work done on the Kandahari justice system by Canadian military legal advisors was shut down and shifted where possible to the UN Development Programme.[271] This pattern followed in other areas. For example, CIDA sought out more and more "implementing partners" so that they could achieve objectives set by the new strategy. Wheat seed distribution was handled in conjunction with Mercy Corps, and CIDA courted the World Food Programme to handle "Winterization" (that is, making sure the people of Kutch did not freeze to death), while the assistance of the UN Development Programme was sought to support the municipal government in Kandahar City. These relationships extended in a number of directions and in some cases, it was not clear if it was Canadian money being spent through them in a direct fashion, so it was, according to reports, difficult to measure specific Canadian effects.[272] An additional effect of this approach was to spread the responsibility for project validation and, most importantly, for completion, away from Canada and its representatives. Other international organizations, some of which possessed notoriously cumbersome bureaucracies, could be blamed if targets established by the new Ottawa process were not met on time.

For the most part, Canadian development personnel focused on the Dahla Dam project, which was renamed the Arghandab Irrigation Rehabilitation Project. The Byzantine specifics of this project and its contracting do not concern us here. The military involvement in the project itself for practical purposes ceased in late 2008. However, there remained the

issue of security in Arghandab District and the casualties incurred by Recce Squadron to ensure access to the Dahla Dam area via Arghandab, plus the ongoing discussions over the possibility of future American command of Arghandab District.

As the civilian component of the PRT expanded its range of implementing partners at the provincial level, very little was done by them at the district level. In effect, CIDA and DFAIT were in their comfort zone in Kandahar City dealing at the provincial and national levels. They progressively lost interest in what was happening in the districts and, in their reportage, increasingly developed a dismissive tone. They lauded the fact that they deployed a handful of people for two weeks to Panjwayi, and talked about "an aggressive level of planning," but this was a far cry from establishing a permanent and effective presence.[273] And, as time progressed, BGen Thompson was less and less interested in the larger Canadian development objectives because they had virtually nothing to do with the deteriorating security system, let alone addressing the real problems that continued to fuel the insurgency.[274]

Strengthening a system that was increasingly seen to be illegitimate by the population, using all of these tools at the PRT, was a serious error on Canada's part. The fact that Governor Raufi did have a higher level of credibility bought Canada some time and likely played a role in generating equilibrium in fall 2008, but these positive steps were effectively canceled out by Ahmad Wali Karzai's machinations, which in turn resulted in Wessa's appointment in January 2009. These factors played out well into 2009.

Supporting TF Kandahar

The NSE, led by LCol Steven Blair, underwent several structural changes during this rotation. This NSE consisted of 455 soldiers but remained responsible for 72 Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency civilians and 288 civilian contractors. After considerable debate, R Company, the battle group administration company, was formed. Based around 86 drivers and maintainers taken from the NSE, this move was a return to doctrinal structures long discussed in the logistics community since 2006.[275] Initially, there were two NSE force protection platoons. Canadian responsibility for covering the KAF entry control point gates ceased when a Slovak unit came in and, with the casualties taken by the OMLT in December, the decision was made to distribute one platoon between the OMLT SECFOR and the Construction Management Organization. Mounted in TLAVs retrieved from Regional Command (South) when the command changed,[276] this improved both organizations' capabilities in the field and also acted to free up forces by protecting MEWTs if they were deployed in vulnerable locations.

In terms of equipment, the heavily armoured Mercedes AHSVS trucks was now fully deployed in Canadian units. And, more importantly, the vehicle had high crew confidence. Early in the tour, an AHSVS struck an IED consisting of 10 kilograms of homemade explosive. One tire out of eight was blown off and the crew did not feel a thing. On another occasion during a "river run," the hydraulics were shot away from one vehicle and it still drove 300 metres out of the kill zone. A new system called the "People Pod" also came online, mostly due to increased concerns about the vulnerability of the Bison fleet to IEDs. The People Pod was an armoured, air-conditioned box that was mounted on an AHSVS and used to move large numbers of personnel from KAF to Ma'Sum Ghar.

By summer 2008, vehicle modifications made by electrical and mechanical engineers included the addition of protection kits to the LAV IIIs. Exposed crew commanders and air sentries had in the past been subjected to blast effects from IEDs. Analysis concluded that adding angled plates around the crew would be effective at deflecting a blast that originated from a point lower than the turret, that is, an IED in the ground or a suicide car. The entire LAV III fleet received these modifications, with vehicles rotated to Ma'Sum Ghar and KAF so the add-on kits could be applied.

The lack of appropriate gap crossing equipment for operations in Zharey and Panjwayi dogged the Canadian troops operating there. The Beaver armoured vehicle launched bridge, which used the Leopard chassis, was deemed too vulnerable to be employed. As a result, the engineers and armoured soldiers recalled a Second World War method instead: fascines. Sixty years ago, armoured engineering vehicles carried bundles of tree trunks lashed together, which were then deposited in a water obstacle or against a wall so that vehicles could cross. In Afghanistan, fascines were made out of medium-diameter heavy PVC piping cut, lashed together, and deposited by AHSVS or by Badger AEVs with their booms into numerous small canals in the districts. The PVC tubes were hollow, so irrigation water could still run through them.[277]

The NSE continued with its Afghan army mentoring and other assistance tasks. In particular LCol Blair maintained relationships with the 5th Kandak commander. The NSE mentors focused on practical aspects of operations, particularly vehicle recovery and basic maintenance over at Camp Hero. When 5th Kandak lacked the skill set to weld new grenade launcher mounts onto 1-205 Brigade vehicles, the NSE ran a welding course for the Afghans so they could do it themselves.

The NSE concept of support for this rotation changed significantly. Previously, the NSE supported the PRT by rotating its cooks, transport, supply and maintenance personnel from other locations. Now, the NSE created an NSE detachment and left it at Camp Nathan Smith under the command of the PRT. There were four other detachments, which consisted

of R Company and NSE: Sperwan Ghar, Wilson, Frontenac and Ma'Sum Ghar. These detachments could form echelons for the battle group sub-units to handle recovery, resupply and repair tasks.

With all of the changes going on in Kabul after the removal of SAT-A and the arrival of the military training personnel, the NSE also had to rethink how it supported and protected them. In time, an NSE detachment of 20 personnel (medical, signals, administrative, close protection party) was established at Camp Souter, the British base in Kabul.

TF Kandahar and the NSE looked at innovative ideas to facilitate logistics support in the Afghan environment. One of these was the Light Logistics Detachment. One issue identified during summer operations was the problem of resupplying dismounted troops in the complex interior of Zharey District with water, particularly Afghan troops working alongside Canadian troops. There were no Canadian helicopters available and the ICATS Mi-8s would not fly in to do this kind of job. Camelback systems (in some case the troops resorted to carrying two of them) were not enough. Some troops carried commercial portable decontamination kits and used local wells when they could, though the preventative medicine staff looked askance at this practice. This led to an experiment involving pack animals. Using Second World War historical data in Italy as a starting point, Maj Charles Jansen crafted and propelled the Light Logistics Detachment idea through the Canadian bureaucracy. In time, a test detachment was formed but there were cultural issues between the Afghan troops and the donkeys which could not be overcome. Over time, the project faded away due to lack of support. In any event, Canadian helicopters were deployed in early 2009, thus facilitating resupply operations in the field.[278]

Reduction of Canadian Influence in Kabul

To briefly recap, the Canadian forces in Afghanistan originally exerted influence in the strategic environment of Kabul through six mechanisms: staff officers and command positions at NATO-led ISAF in Afghanistan and the American-led CSTC-A; SAT-A; the Policy Action Group; a staff officer at UNAMA; and the Canadian Embassy. And, as noted previously, the overall purpose of wielding such influence was the long-standing need to have Canadian planning input and situational awareness to protect Canadian interests and to prevent the misuse of Canadian troops by other entities.

By late 2008 and early 2009, the system had nearly completely broken down. SAT-A was gone, due more to bureaucratic rivalry than any other reason. The Americans quickly filled the vacuum. Personality conflicts at UNAMA led to the withdrawal of the Canadian military representative there for the time being. The Policy Action Group, which had SAT-A representation, was also defunct. This left Canadian positions in the two military commands, ISAF and CSTC-A.[279]

Estrangement also built between the Kandahar PRT and NATO ISAF. By 2009, Canadian officers assigned to ISAF responsible for reporting PRT data were told by other Canadians they would not be welcome at the Kandahar PRT. As it turned out, this was just the symptom of a larger issue. In effect, the Canadian government decided to distance itself from Kabul politics and focus its efforts solely on Kandahar Province. This coincided with the deteriorating Kabul political scene, which, in turn, was related to the continuation of Hamid Karzai as President and the upcoming elections. As the elections loomed in late 2008, any coherency in the Kabul political process ceased to exist and any national agenda that could be tracked back to the heady days of the Constitutional Loya Jirga of 2003–2004 was shunted aside. Indeed, Canadian officers tracking the situation believed there were three uncontrollable issues affecting the Afghan political scene: narcotics, Pakistan, and Hamid Karzai.

There were still positive effects that could be generated in Kabul, particularly on the training side, which built on relationships dating back to the 2003 ETT relationships. Nine personnel positions from SAT-A were transferred to CSTC-A and, working with the Americans, the Canadians focused on improving and developing the Junior Officer Staff Course with an eye to influencing a future generation of Afghan officers. In addition, the Canadian Army also supported the Staff and Language Training Centre Afghanistan. Given the horrifyingly high illiteracy level, anything that could be done to improve the ANSF in that area was welcome. Another agenda in both of these structures was to depoliticize the Afghan National Army as much as possible by encouraging socialization beyond tribal and ethnic groupings. These remained long-term projects. It was recognized that there would be no immediate effects on the campaign in Kandahar but this sort of investment might have an impact on the future stability of the country.

However, the entire international effort in Kabul was simply not meshing in 2008 and 2009 and it is possible that this led some in Ottawa to focus on Kandahar Province and stay out of the strategic level. Maj.-Gen. Al Howard noted that:

> In ISAF headquarters there are two teams. There's the ISAF team and then the inner-circle American team. The inner-circle American team is hunting with Reapers and all sorts of stuff, banging away at things. What's not going on is any outreach to the UN to say, "Hey Mr. UN dude, can you come over here and help us mentor and create a governance system with the Afghans?" The last guy who does any effective nation building is [General] David Richards when he forms the PAG….My impression was that the UN and NATO guys aren't getting along [in 2008] and this is a missed opportunity.

The Canadian Army representative at UNAMA was Col Mark Skidmore, who, as we will recall from Volume I, served with the UN in Kabul in the 1990s. Skidmore thought the situation with the UN in Afghanistan was untenable. According to MGen Howard, "I think the whole UN thing was so ineffective, so petty, and so ridiculous that he [Skidmore] just put his hands up and said, 'You can get me out of here.'" Howard believed that ISAF commanders did not get along with the UNAMA leadership at all "but it may have been the personality of the [UN] Head of Mission as well."[280] Indeed, the closure of SAT-A only compounded the situation: it was the only organization that was providing dedicated assistance to the highest level of government in Afghanistan:

> So Canada decides to put some more effort down south. This is where the RoCK comes in. The emphasis is now on Kandahar Province and not on the higher- level. Probably at the military's insistence, we've got [LGen] Mike Gauthier [at CEFCOM] and all that yelling and screaming, "More focus, more focus." So DFAIT and CIDA answer the mail by putting more focus more focus, by putting as big a team as we're ever going to get down south. But it diminishes what was going on in Kabul…there's a bit of a power drain there. Canada has influence. If you have troops in Kandahar Province, you have influence….We don't use the influence.[281]

It was around this time that a number of Canadian senior officers believed that the Canadian government was seriously ambivalent about the war in Afghanistan:

> I think the government comes to the realization that this is a lost cause. The early heady days of Canada demanding, "Fix this, fix that": None of this "fix this or fix that" is happening. There is nothing effective happening in Kabul. So there's nothing to influence anyway…. So you've got the commander of ISAF, troops dealing with the tactical issues, and that's where he puts his emphasis….We've got a government that isn't effective and we're not trying to improve it. And [there was] safe sanctuary for the Taliban [in Pakistan].[282]

There was, in effect, a strategic vacuum in Kabul:

> So here are the Canadians, mowing the grass down, winning tactically, doing all the right stuff. But it's not being matched at the higher level, the Canadian government is not engaging strong enough…and the Americans don't know how to do it. They're not doing the nation-building pieces.[283]

Thompson Departs

BGen Thompson distributed his "Parting Thoughts" on 7 February 2009 to the staff at JTF-A HQ.[284] They are worth quoting in some detail, as they were the clearest and most cogent expression of the Canadian situation in Afghanistan up to this point in the war. Thompson stressed up front that "these are my thoughts which may not precisely align with other interested parties." Thompson characterized Pakistan as the "number one" problem:

> At the root, an inexhaustible supply of willing recruits from the unregulated madrassas just across the border. These factories of willing jihadists show no signs of letting up. I would go so far as to suggest that if we fixed this one element, we would be a long way down the road to solving the whole problem allowing the Pashtun belt to return to its steady state (one that would still be alien to us all)….I believe we must look for mitigating strategies in the short term and while the new U.S. Administration develops their strategy on this side of the Durand Line.

Thompson was increasingly concerned about the continued legitimacy of the Kabul government:

> With a declared election date of 20 August 2009, there is an important marker on the table. Without question, the potential suspension of executive government power's [sic] beyond 25 May is troubling. It could mean, bearing in mind time for a runoff election and inauguration preparations, a gap in executive government until November 2009. All the more reason to show resolve in the election's conduct.

Voter registration had gone well in Kandahar and there would be no excuses as there were in 2004: "I would assert that if the Pashtun are disenfranchised they will have only themselves to blame."

The next largest problem for Thompson was

> the folly of our current command construct. NATO ISAF, CENTCOM, CSTC-A U.S. SOCOM SOF, national agendas etc. It is practically speaking an untenable muddle. Without unity of command, unity of effort is almost impossible….It is nugatory effort for nations to write elaborate plans, often without reference to in-theatre documents, for their narrow patches from capitals. We need to develop a new construct….

At the operational level,

> I arrived believing that a thorough understanding of tribal dynamics was essential to success…. Nevertheless, we are still Ferengi and were surprised, as an example, by the abrupt dismissal of Governor Raufi and the subsequent appointment of Governor Wessa. Perhaps surprised is too dramatic and astonished would be more fitting—astonished at the Mafia-like functioning of Afghan politics. In short we need to continue to bore into the detail of tribal dynamics if we are to ascertain which levers truly move the people of Southern Afghanistan.

As for development issues, Thompson favoured the delivery of "tangible results" in irrigation, electricity, roads and unemployment, citing the work of the Construction Management Organization as the way forward. "And then there is my hobby horse, ridden mercilessly since I arrived - increasing troop density." 2-2 Infantry and the expansion of 1-205 Brigade was a big help but "some thought should be given to deploying Afghan National Army forces south from quieter northern sectors." A doubling of police and the retention of mentors with them in the districts was necessary if the Focused District Development process were to work.

He paid tribute to tactical successes:

> Apart from our soldiers on the ground facing the enemy day and night, our tactical level intelligence has most impressed me. We know the populated areas of Kandahar Province. The level of detail to which we know the grounds a marvel permitting true partnered operations that are intelligence-cued against known targets (individuals or compounds of interest). Large-scale advance-to-contacts are no longer necessary because of the quality of the intelligence we receive, which drives precision operations aimed at deepening and protecting the hold. The entire process is a gem that must be captured for future operations.

Finally,

> People's will seems a fickle trait. As I follow the debate in Canada about the mission in Afghanistan, I'm left to wonder how our countrymen of the day shouldered the losses of previous wars. Are we the same nation? One thing is certain. We are served by the finest soldiers in the world. They have held this province during a difficult fighting season without complaint, hell, with unbridled enthusiasm. I leave with a renewed respect for our soldiers. We should count ourselves privileged to have walked in their company.

Conclusion

By early 2009, the situation in Kandahar Province remained stalemated. The Canadians and Afghan forces were unable to gain complete control of the districts west of Kandahar City and a series of terrorist attacks challenged the perception that Kandahar City was under some form of coalition control. In those districts lay islands of stability which, when combined with manoeuvring coalition forces, acted to disrupt enemy activities directed at taking complete control of those districts or those directed at the city. Several factors contributed to this equilibrium. First, scarce resources were directed at keeping Highway 1 west of the city open so that British operations could be resupplied and supported in Helmand. Second, the inability of the Afghans to progress in the governance sphere, coupled with inter-tribal and inter-power-broker rivalry was exploited by the enemy to gain lodgments in Arghandab and Senjaray. Third, withdrawal from tactical infrastructure, which made sense for economic reasons, actually made the situation worse in Zharey and Panjwayi.

Police capacity-building was, by the end of 2008, proceeding at a crawl but there were still far too many entities involved in solving the problem. This was significantly influenced by the incoherent American approach to fixing policing after the Germans passed it off to them, and to some extent by personality issues in Kandahar Province. These issues were beyond Canadian control and were really the long-term effects of Germany's failed policing policy, this being seven years after the Bonn Agreement. Canadian P-OMLT, Canadian CIVPOL, and American police mentors, however, were effective at propping up district-level police despite risk, losses and scarce resources.

Afghan National Army capacity-building was a Canadian success story. With a full Afghan brigade deployed into the districts backed up with Canadian OMLT resources, troop density levels were promising—if only the policing and governance pieces could have been sorted out. The main issue for the Afghan army and the OMLTs was the continual redeployment of 2nd Kandak to prop up the flagging British effort in Helmand. This stripped away forces and reduced troop density in the front-line districts, just when they were needed to implement Hold and Build functions.

What is best described as "attrition operations" were stunningly successful. Leadership targeting by special operations forces and airpower; the large numbers of insurgents that exposed themselves and were killed during Operation ASP-E JANUBI; and the armed ISTAR fight conducted at the JTF Afghanistan and battle group levels significantly attenuated the enemy's capabilities in Kandahar Province during 2008.

As for the crucial governance issue, the extreme turbulence of the shift from Khalid to Raufi to Wessa severely undermined government legitimacy. General Raufi was the best hope for the government in improving its credibility and legitimacy. Ahmad Wali Karzai,

and those in the Popalzai power structure who felt threatened by a non-Popalzai in command with growing cross-tribal public support, snuffed this fleeting light of hope. This above all else undermined Canadian efforts across the board and ensured that the population remained on the fence. Similarly, the district-level mechanisms like the Joint District Coordination Centres continued to mature but were themselves fatally undermined by a combination of tribal dynamics, individual lack of vision, and by association with increasingly questionable provincial-level government legitimacy.

No level of development was going to address these systemic problems. Indeed, the new Canadian strategy was nearly completely disconnected from these crucial issues: schools, polio eradication, and the Dahla Dam project bore no relationship to anything other than trying to improve Afghan lives. Though this may seem to be a laudable goal, it was counterproductive in a counter-insurgency war. Aid projects unconnected to the government become ostensibly neutral, which, in turn, means that the insurgency can claim credit for allowing them to take place. The new strategy laudably addressed security capacity-building but this took a back seat to the "signature" projects. In effect, those who crafted the new strategy established a number of projects, determined a means of measuring the progress of those projects, and created a method of reporting progress. However, as seen, none of them addressed the key issues fuelling the insurgency in Kandahar Province.

The dysfunctional approach to development in the districts consisted of a plethora of projects designed to improve the livelihood of the population but, again, they were not connected to governance. And, like the larger projects, the enemy could claim that they were "allowing" local projects to continue in a leadership vacuum. Canadian forces did what they could to integrate development at the district level but were hampered by the inability to have OGD continuity at the district level. That left the continuity to CIMIC, the Construction Management Organization, and the Specialist Engineer Team. Without a Canadian OGD "piece" at the district level, the three lines of operation (governance, development and security) could not be synchronized.

At best, the Canadians and the Afghans could continue to disrupt the enemy and challenge them wherever they were operating. Capacity-building efforts with the police and army continued apace, while incremental and ad hoc measures to capacity-build at the district level slowly moved forward. The Highway 1 main service route remained open for the British in Helmand while TF Kandahar awaited reinforcements.

ENDNOTES

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3. CCOA, “Canada’s Engagement in Afghanistan, September 2008,” p. 1.
4. Ibid.
5. Interviews with Col Spike Hazleton and Col Rene Melançon [Op TOLO].
6. Interview with BGen Denis Thompson (Ottawa, 14 February 2012).
7. Telephone interview with LCol Lee Hammond (13 July 2012).
8. As depicted in Bing West’s *No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah* (New York: Bantam Books, 2005).
9. Thompson papers, “Operational Philosophy V2” (4 October 2008).
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Casualty reporting was connected to maintaining support of the mission. Grieving family members now had immediate access to or could be exploited by the media, which could result in negative publicity for the Canadian Forces, DND, and the government in general.
13. Interview with Colonel Jamie Cade (Kandahar, 2 February 2009).
14. Discussions between the author and senior Canadian representatives at ISAF HQ (Kabul, 6–7 March 2009).
15. Thompson interview.
16. Interviews with LCol Hugh Ferguson (KAF, 1 and 2 February 2009).
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. JTF-A HQ DSR (17 November 2008).
22. JTF-A HQ DSR (6 December 2008).
23. TF 3-08 DSR (4 September 2008).
24. TF 3-08 DSR (7 September 2008).
25. JDCC DSR (22 September 2008).
26. TF 3-08 DSRs (9 and 10 September 2008).
27. TF 3-08 DSRs (7, 9 and 27 September 2008).
28. TF 3-08 DSRs (5 and 9 September 2008).
29. TF 3-08 DSRs (4, 9, 11, 24, 27 September 2008).
30. TF 3-08 DSRs (7, 8, 9, 10, 17 September 2008); OMLT DSR.
31. OMLT DSR (3 September 2008).

32. OMLT DSR (4 September 2008).
33. OMLT DSRs (4, 5, 6, 7 September 2008).
34. OMLT DSR (17 September 2008).
35. PRT DSR (25 September 2008). It is likely Nabi was killed because he was a potential obstacle to elements of the Panjwayi power structure and their objectives.
36. JDCC DSR (5 September 2008).
37. PRT DSR (17 September 2008).
38. Battle group DSR (28 September 2008).
39. JTF-A HQ DSRs (2 and 3 September 2008).
40. Battle group DSR (16 September 2008).
41. OMLT DSRs (2–6 September 2008).
42. OMLT DSRs (7–13 September 2008).
43. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 September 2008).
44. OMLT DSR (28 September 2008).
45. OMLT DSR (23 September 2008).
46. Battle group DSR (16 September 2008).
47. JDCC DSR (16 September 2008).
48. PRT DSR (21 September 2008).
49. JTF-A HQ DSR (6 September 2008).
50. PRT DSR (20 September 2008).
51. JTF-A HQ DSR (3 September 2008).
52. Battle group DSR (5 September 2008).
53. PRT DSR (8 September 2008).
54. JTF-A HQ DSRs (1–30 September 2008).
55. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 September 2008).
56. PRT DSR (1 September 2008).
57. PRT DSR (1–5 September 2008).
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62. JTF-A HQ DSR (22 September 2008).
63. Ibid.
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66. PRT DSRs (9 and 14 October 2008).
67. JTF-A HQ DSR (19 October 2008).
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69. J2 DSR (23 October 2008).
70. "OMLT Rotation 5-End of Tour Report" (13 September 2008).
71. Interview with Col Jamie Cade (KAF, 4 February 2009). Interview with Major Chris Comeau (Kingston, 15 May 2012).
72. Comeau interview.
73. Comeau suggests that when his rotation departed, the limited view was in play: "When I arrived early 2009, it appeared to me that the expanded view was in play." See interview with Major Steve Nolan (Ma'Sum Ghar, 11 February 2009).
74. OCCP DSR (28 September 2008); Cade interview.
75. Interview with LCol Dana Woodworth (Camp Nathan Smith, 10 February 2009).
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. Confidential interview.
79. Interview with Andrew Scyner (Camp Nathan Smith, 6 February 2009).
80. Based on numerous exasperated and vehement discussions between civilian and military JTF-A HQ personnel, and the author in the summer of 2008 and spring 2009.
81. Ibid.
82. NATO, *Afghanistan Report 2009*, pp. 24–25.
83. Ibid., p. 16.
84. WikiLeaks, message American embassy Kabul to State, "General McKiernan's January 4, 2009 Briefing on The Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF)" (8 January 2009); WikiLeaks, message American embassy Kabul to State, "Informing NATO Allies of Potential Changes to US SOF Posture in Afghanistan" (27 February 2009); NATO, *Afghanistan Report 2009*, p. 16.
85. Scyner interview.
86. Thompson, Woodworth and Cade discussions with the author (KAF, February 2009).
87. Cade interview.
88. Woodworth interview.
89. PRT DSRs (15–25 September 2008).
90. JTF-A HQ DSRs (30, 31 October; 2, 3, 8, 28, 29 November; and 1, 2, 16 December 2008).
91. Discussions with LCol Bob Chamberlain (KAF, January 2008).
92. JTF-A HQ DSR (31 October 2008 to 1 January 2009).
93. PRT DSR (13 November 2008).

94. PRT DSR (14 January 2009); confidential interview. It was unclear to the CIMIC teams, at least in their daily reportage, why all of this was taking place at the time but in retrospect, it may have been related to the planned Kandahar City bypass highway project that Ahmad Wali Karzai was so interested in. Acquisition of land, and then its sale to the government so that the road could be built, could be profitable. Even more so if the same individual's construction consortium built the road.

95. The author was confronted with this logic by numerous Afghans in social environments over several years in various districts of Kandahar Province.

96. JTF-A HQ DSRs (5–10 October 2008).

97. Cade interview (2 February 2009).

98. OCC-P DSR (10 January 2009). When read between the lines, it appears as though Ahmad Wali Karzai was pressuring Hamid Karzai to do something about Ghorak. The implication is that Ahmad Wali Karzai was either involved in the illicit activities in that district or was acting on behalf of somebody else in the Kandahar or Helmand power structures who were.

99. This section is based on Ch. 11 in Sean M. Maloney, *War in Afghanistan: Eight Battles in the South* (Kingston: CDA Press, 2012).

100. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 October 2008).

101. JTF-A HQ DSR (16 October 2008).

102. JTF-A DSR (24 October 2008).

103. PRT DSR (5 October 2008).

104. PRT DSR (9 October 2008).

105. OMLT DSR (5 October 2008).

106. OMLT DSR (8 October 2008).

107. PRT DSR (15 October 2008).

108. PRT DSR (30 October 2008).

109. "Operation ARTASH CONOP Level 1 Briefing" (24 October 2008).

110. JTF-A HQ DSR (28 October 2008); note that the JTF-A HQ briefing slide for the Op ARTASH contacts was labelled "Today's nonsense" instead of its usual title.

111. JTF-A HQ DSR (4 October 2008). This was the start of a psychological trap that subsequent rotations got into. The delineation of the 28-29 easting on the map for Panjwayi District cognitively constrained thinking about the district and this amounted to accepting psychologically that the enemy controlled the area west of the 28-29 easting, with long-term effects on Canadian operations.

112. OMLT DSR (13 October 2008).

113. Battle group DSR (4 October 2008).

114. Battle group DSR (20 October 2008).

115. OMLT DSR (5 October 2008).

116. OMLT DSR (13 October 2008).

117. Interview with LCol Hugh Ferguson (KAF, 2 February 2008).

118. "Op SHNA DARA 2 Frag O Op ARAY Lvl 2 CONOP Brief" (2 October 2008).

119. Battle group DSR (6 October 2008).
120. JTF-A HQ DSR (7 October 2008). See also "Op ARAY SIGACT Slide, 5 October 2008."
121. Interview with Major Fraser Auld (KAF, 3 February 2009). To what extent the ICRC provided medical support to the Taliban and undermined the Afghan government's attempts to establish a health care system in Kandahar is something that requires more detailed examination elsewhere.
122. Battle group DSR; "Op ARAY SIGACAT Slide, 6 October 2008." (7 October 2008).
123. JTF-A HQ DSR (8 October 2008).
124. "Op ARAY SIGACAT Slide, 8 October 2008."
125. Battle group DSR (10 October 2008).
126. PRT DSR (17 October 2008).
127. JTF-A DSR (23 October 2008).
128. Interview with Major Dean Tremblay (Harrowsmith, 4 March 2013).
129. Ibid.
130. Ibid.
131. PRT DSR (17 October 2008).
132. Battle group DSRs (1–10 October 2008).
133. Battle group DSRs (23–24 October 2008).
134. PRT DSR (24 October 2008).
135. JTF-A HQ DSR (7 October 2008).
136. PRT DSR (3 October 2008).
137. JTF-A HQ DSR (17 October 2008).
138. JTF-A HQ DSR (20 October 2008).
139. JTF-A HQ DSRs (29–31 October 2008).
140. PRT DSRs (1, 5, 6 November 2008).
141. J2 DSR (8 November 2008).
142. Interview with LCol Hugh Ferguson (KAF, 1 February 2009).
143. OMLT DSR (10–12 November 2008).
144. JTF-A HQ DSR (13 November 2008).
145. Ibid.
146. OMLT DSR (13 November 2008).
147. JTF-A HQ DSRs (20–24 November 2008).
148. JTF-A HQ DSRs (1–30 December 2008).
149. JTF-A HQ DSRs (29 and 31 December 2008).
150. Battle group DSR (6 November 2008).

151. JTF-A HQ DSR (9 November 2008).
152. Interview with LCol Roger Barrett (KAF, 5 February 2009).
153. Battle group DSR (6 November 2008).
154. Battle group DSR (7 November 2008).
155. OMLT DSRs (8–11 November 2008).
156. OMLT DSRs (12–19 November 2008).
157. JTF-A HQ DSRs (17–19 November 2008).
158. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 November 2008).
159. Derived from JTF- A HQ reported SIGACTS for the month of December 2008.
160. JTF-A HQ DSR (1 December 2008).
161. JTF-A HQ SIGACT slides (27 December 2008).
162. Compiled from CIMIC reportage through the PRT to JTF-A HQ for November 2008.
163. Author's observations after spending time with CMT-1 during February 2009.
164. Compiled from CIMIC reportage through the PRT to JTF-A HQ for December 2008.
165. Ibid.
166. Ibid.
167. Compiled from JTF-A HQ SIGACTS for the month of November 2008.
168. Battle group DSR (16 November 2008).
169. Battle group DSR (17 November 2008).
170. JTF-A HQ DSR (17 November 2008).
171. JTF-A HQ DSR (20 November 2008).
172. OMLT DSR (24 November 2008).
173. JTF-A HQ DSRs (25–29 November 2008).
174. Battle group DSR (14 December 2008).
175. PRT CIMIC report (10 November 2008). Note that I have removed the elder's name to protect him.
176. Ibid.
177. PRT DSRs (17, 19 and 28 November 2008).
178. PRT DSR (16 December 2008).
179. JTF-A HQ DSR (23 December 2008).
180. PRT CIMIC report (18 December 2008).
181. JTF-A HQ DSR (19 December 2008).
182. Ferguson interview.
183. Compiled from JTF-A HQ DSR and SIGACTS for the month of November 2008.
184. J2 DSR (13 November 2008).

185. JTF-A HQ DSR (24 November 2008).
186. JTF-A HQ DSR (27 November 2008).
187. SIGACT slide, “BG C/S 22 IED Strike” (5 December 2008).
188. SIGACT Slide, “OMLT C/S 71D IED Strike IVO Senjaray” (5 December 2008).
189. SIGACT Slide, “KPRT QRF IED Attack IVO Senjaray” (13 December 2008).
190. Ferguson interview.
191. Mulawyshyn interview; Thompson interviews.
192. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 September 2008).
193. Mulawyshyn interview. See also “Op KASSAT Action Plan RRS-East of Senjaray IEDs as at 201200D December. 2008.”
194. Ibid.
195. JTF-A HQ DSR (16 December 2008).
196. Battle group DSR (17 December 2008).
197. Ibid.
198. J2 DSR (16 December 2008).
199. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 December 2008).
200. TFK “Operation PANCAR CONOP Level 1 Briefing” (19 December 2008); JTF-A HQ DSR (16 December 2008).
201. Battle group DSR (19 December 2008).
202. JTF-A HQ DSRs (18–20 December 2008).
203. Battle group DSR (20 December 2008).
204. JTF-A HQ DSR (22 December 2008).
205. J2 DSR (23 December 2008).
206. JTF-A HQ “Op JAKAR” (18 December 2008).
207. JTF-A HQ DSRs (24–29 December 2008); Ferguson interview; WikiLeaks, “Afghanistan War Log: 2008” identifies TF 373 as the SOF unit involved.
208. Email correspondence with LCol Marc St Yves (23 and 25 June 2012).
209. Compiled from JTF-A HQ DSRs and SIGACTS for the month of November 2008.
210. Ibid.
211. Ibid. Tremblay interview.
212. Tremblay interview.
213. Compiled from JTF-A HQ DSRs and SIGACTS for the month of December 2008.
214. PRT DSR CIMIC report (2 November 2008).
215. PRT DSR (20 December 2008).

216. One of the more surreal reports from CIMIC involved a visit to the village of Munara Sharifa: "When it was asked if there were any insurgents in the village or area, the language assistant heard someone say, "I am an insurgent." A male 30 to 34 years old, heavy build, 6ft tall, dressed in black with a large black beard. He left immediately after the question was asked, heading north." PRT CIMIC report (5 November 2008).
217. Compiled from JTF-A HQ DSRs and SIGACTS for September–December 2008.
218. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 November 2008).
219. Compiled from 2-2 Infantry daily reportage to JTF-A HQ for the month of November as expressed in the DSR.
220. Ibid.
221. It was never clear whether this was the act of a deranged man or an event incited by a local Taliban commander. The author worked with the 2-2 Infantry HTT during Operation JALEY and discussed the Lloyd killing with the team. There was a theory that a particular insurgent commander may have been behind the incident, but there was no means of proving it.
222. JTF-A HQ DSR (12 November 2008).
223. PRT DSR (17 December 2008).
224. JTF-A HQ DSRs (14–16 December 2008).
225. JTF-A HQ DSR (30 December 2008).
226. JTF-A HQ Air Wing briefing to the author (KAF, 8 March 2009).
227. Discussion with Colonel Chris Coates (KAF, 8 March 2009). Note that Turkey had about 30 upgraded AH-1F Cobras, many of which were in storage having just come out of service while they transitioned to a new Italian machine.
228. Air Wing briefing to the author (KAF, 28 July 2010).
229. JTF-A Air Wing DSRs (22, 25, 29, 30 December 2009).
230. SkyLink briefing to the author (KAF, 2 February 2009).
231. JTF-A HQ Air Wing briefing to the author (KAF, 8 March 2009).
232. See Thompson Papers, Daily Diary for October–December 2008; Woodworth interview (10 February 2009). Note that the post-Ritz environment was significantly more collegial and conducive to inter-organizational cooperation.
233. Woodworth interview.
234. Thompson interview (KAF, 31 January 2009).
235. Auld interview; Interview with Jennie Chen (KAF, 7 February 2009).
236. Cade interview.
237. Thompson interview.
238. Discussion with Major Orest Babij (KAF, 4 February 2009).
239. OCC-P DSR (6 December 2008).
240. Thompson interview.
241. JTF-A HQ Monthly Assessment Report for December 2008 (January 2009).
242. This section is based on Chapter 12 in Maloney, *War in Afghanistan: Eight Battles in the South* (Kingston: CDA Press, 2012).

243. OMLT DSR (17 January 2008).
244. PRT DSRs (1–30 January 2008).
245. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 January 2008).
246. Compiled from JTF-A HQ DSRs and SIGACT reports for January 2008.
247. J2 DSR (18 January 2008).
248. PRT DSR (22 January 2008).
249. PRT DSR (20 January 2008).
250. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 January 2008).
251. Ibid.
252. Battle group DSR (7 January 2008).
253. OMLT DSR (9 January 2008).
254. JTF-A HQ DSR (10 January 2008).
255. Battle group DSRs (16–17 January 2008).
256. OMLT and battle group DSRs (20–21 January 2008).
257. JTF-A HQ DSRs (22 and 24 January 2008).
258. OMLT DSR (24 January 2008).
259. OMLT and battle group DSRs (24–26 January 2008).
260. J2 DSR (6 January 2008).
261. The author spent several days with CMT-1 observing its operations in February 2009.
262. Compiled from JTF-A HQ DSRs for the month of January 2009 plus author's notes from the field.
263. PRT DSR (13 January 2009).
264. PRT DSRs (12, 14 and 18 January 2009).
265. PRT DSR (18 January 2009).
266. PRT DSR (22 January 2009).
267. JTF-A HQ DSR (24 January 2009).
268. JTF-A HQ DSR (23 January 2009).
269. Ironically, this was in Haji Agha Lalai Dastagiri Village.
270. PRT DSR (19 January 2008).
271. JTF-A HQ "Task Force Kandahar Monthly Assessment Report for October 2008" (November 2008).
272. JTF-A HQ "Monthly Assessment Report for December 2008" (January 2009).
273. My take on this is derived from reading the MARs for September, October, November, and December 2008.
274. Thompson interview.
275. This section is based on an interview with LCol S.T. Blair (KAF, 10 February 2009) and a briefing by the NSE to the author.

276. Regional Command (South) appropriated a TLAV platoon for force protection and QRF which reduced the Construction Management Organization's ability to move around, which led at the time to some friction between the two headquarters.

277. Certainly if LCols Hope and Lavoie's units had proper gap-crossing equipment on 3 August and 3 September they would not have been canalized by the canal on the left flank on approach to the White School.

278. "Light Logistics Det (LLD) Proposal by Maj C. Jansen, TFK G4" (n/d).

279. This section is based on numerous discussions by the author with Canadian officers in Kabul in March 2009.

280. Howard interview.

281. Ibid.

282. Ibid.

283. Ibid.

284. BGen Denis Thompson, "Parting Thoughts, 7 February 2009."

APPENDIX A:

CONVERGENCE OF INTERESTS IN THE SARPOSA PRISON BREAK AND ARGHANDAB II, JUNE 2008

The effects of the June 2008 Sarposa Prison break and its aftermath highlight the complexities of Kandahar provincial politics, the insurgency, and Canada's inability to react effectively to this dynamic during the course of the war. In Sarposa, numerous competing interests may have temporarily aligned, leaving Canada to take the blame as a mark would in a confidence scam. This appendix is one means of depicting this complexity and should not be seen as a final, definitive theory pending the availability of better or additional information.

The interested parties in this event included: the Popalzai representatives in the Kandahar power structure; the Taliban based in northern Kandahar province; and the Taliban based in Quetta. The targets in this scheme included: the remnants of the Alikozai power base in Arghandab; their Alizai allies in Asheque and Senjaray led by Habibullah Jan; and some emergent or potential power competitors that were not tribally-based.

The Taliban operation into Arghandab immediately following Sarposa effectively suppressed the remnants of the Alikozai tribe who were loyal to the deceased Mullah Naqib. Karimullah was seen by many to be an extension of Asadullah Khalid's power and seen less and less as a legitimate descendent of his father's power base. This situation split the Alikozais, leaving them vulnerable to Taliban activity. Indeed, the Arghandab chief of police was targeted the same day as the Sarposa attack, rendering a timely district-level response to heightened Taliban activity impotent. This was a win-win situation for both the Taliban and the Popalzai representatives. The Alikozais were the losers.

The Taliban in Quetta benefitted from the 'spectacular' information operations generated by the Sarposa breakout. That was possibly worth more to them in the long run than the subsequent failed operation into Arghandab. Within six weeks, their fighters from Shah Wali Kot and Khakrez were back to work assassinating and intimidating the Alikozai power structure remnants into submission. The Popalzai representatives probably counted on a swift ISAF and ANSF response to the Arghandab incursion to balance out any geographical gains made by the insurgents in the district. In addition, they likely believed that they would keep them at bay. The Taliban and the Popalzai representatives were once again in a win-win situation: the Alikozais, who were an impediment to the Taliban and would not submit to the Popalzais, have their influence steadily reduced by both. The Alikozais were once again the losers.

The Taliban who escaped from Sarposa dispersed to Arghandab, Senjaray, and Nakhonay. Some continued on to Band-e Timor via Mushan, but the bulk stayed in Kandahar province. The Alizai leadership in Senjaray and Asheque were aligned with the Alikozais and had antagonistic relations with the Popalzai power structure. A large number of escaped Taliban headed for Senjaray where they reinforced a flagging insurgency in that crucial area on Highway 1. This was problematic for Habibullah Jan and his people. Eventually Habibullah Jan was assassinated but not by the Taliban. This, coupled with the reduction of Alikozai influence in Kandahar, resulted in a catastrophic loss of Alizai influence. The Taliban and the Popalzai power structure were, once again, in a win-win situation. Once again, the Popalzai power structure knew that ISAF would use force to suppress the Taliban in Senjaray in order to keep the road open. In time, security forces controlled by the Popalzai power structure deployed to Senjaray to 'help' Habibullah Jan's brother defend the district. The Alizais were the losers in this situation, as were the Alikozais.

General Saqib's role in proceedings is interesting. He was fired for inaction by Asadullah Khalid but that inaction may have been purchased by someone, whether the Taliban or by someone in the Popalzai power structure. It may have been lower-level police personnel whose inaction was purchased. Saqib was, apparently, investigating the Popalzai power structure for corruption either to use it as leverage to become a player in it (one view), or because he was actually interested in cleaning up Kandahar (another view). This latter view did not coincide with Saqib's involvement in moving 'his' police into Maywand to replace 'police' controlled by Haji Saifullah (an ally of the Popalzai power structure) and then using those police to conduct selective poppy eradication. Notably, Saqib did not like competing police organizations that were not under his control and he was involved in the emergent and expanding security company boon that was generated when ISAF needed forward operating base security coverage while forces deployed on operations. As we saw with UNAMA poaching police in 2006 with higher salaries, there was a lot of money to be made by 'moonlighting' police. Moreover, Asadullah Khalid's private militia was now ascendant and less likely to be disbanded because of the 'failure' of Saqib's provincial police. The Taliban and the Popalzai power structure once again had a win-win situation: the Taliban gained from the removal of an effective police chief, the Popalzai power structure gained from the removal of a possible threat or rival. Saqib was the loser.

The escapees who reached Nakhonay eventually initiated operations against Dand, a Barakzai-dominated and relatively quiet district. The Governor's private militia then heavily augmented the Dand police right after Sarposa. It is likely that this was a measure to reassure the Barakzai power structure and protect their interests in that district from any fall-out that may be generated by enhanced Taliban operations after Sarposa.

This was a win-win for the Popalzai power structure and the Barakzai power structure. Dand was protected from collateral damage and the Popalzai power structure did not have to worry about a two-front war against the Barakzai and the Taliban. The only losers here were the Taliban escapees in Nakhonay who wound up fighting Khalid's militia.

Finally, there was the Governor, Asadullah Khalid. The Canadian government wanted Khalid removed for corruption and went public with these desires in April when Maxime Bernier was quoted by the media. This was a major personal slight that could not go unanswered by Khalid. The inaction of the Afghan security forces to the Sarposa attack, which led to the Canadian Army temporarily abandoning its efforts in Zharey and Panjwayi in order to deal with Arghandab, undermined the Canadian strategic agenda in Kandahar. Ahmad Wali Karzai publicly blamed Canada for not responding fast enough to Sarposa. Whether Asadullah Khalid played a role in influencing this inaction or not is unknown. If it were ever proven, this would constitute another win-win for the Taliban and the Popalzai representatives in Kandahar. Security pressure on the Taliban in Zharey and Panjwayi was removed, while Canada was publicly humiliated. Canada and ultimately the Afghan people of Kandahar were the losers. It should also be noted that Governor Asadullah Khalid departed Kandahar province prior to the Sarposa break out and Operation DOUR BURKHOU and did not return for some time, leaving his deputy governor in charge.

One can debate whether these events were calculated, opportunistic or random and there is plenty of room to manoeuvre when it comes to personal motivations. There is no debate that the Sarposa affair and the second Arghandab operation seriously undermined Canada's position in Afghanistan and accelerated the demise of Alikozai power in Kandahar.

GLOSSARY

ACP	Access control point
ADATS	Air defence anti-tank system
ADZ	Afghan Development Zone
AEV	Armoured engineer vehicle
AHDS	Afghan Health Delivery Services
AHP	Afghan Highway Police
ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANCOP	Afghan National Civil Order Police
ANDS	Afghan National Development Strategy
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan national security forces, ISAF shorthand for both the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police as a collective.
APC	Armoured personnel carrier
APPP or AP3	Afghan Public Protection Program
APRP	Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program
ARSIC	Afghan Regional Security Integration Commands
ARV	Armoured recovery vehicle
ASIC	All Source Intelligence Centre
ASOP	Afghan Social Outreach Program
AUP	Afghan Uniformed Police

AVIDV	Arghandab Valley Integrated Development Vision
AVLB	Armoured vehicle-launched bridge
AWK	Ahmad Wali Karzai
Bdr	Bombardier
BG	Battle group
BIP	Blow in place
BSC	Battle space commander
C/S	Callsign
CADG	Central Asian Development Group
CANSOFCOM	Canadian Special Operations Forces Command
CCDC	Clustered Community Development Council
CDC	Community Development Council
CEFCOM	Canadian Expeditionary Force Command
CER	Combat Engineer Regiment
CEXC	Combined Explosives Exploitation Cell
CF	Canadian Forces
CFC-A	Combined Forces Command–Afghanistan
CFNIS	Canadian Forces National Investigative Service
CGSO	Canadian Government Support Office
CHF	Canadian Helicopter Force
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
C-IED	Counter-IED
CIMIC	Civil-military cooperation

CIVPOL	Civilian Police, or the 30-strong RCMP contingent assigned to the civilian police component of the United Nations Protection Force
CJSOTF	Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force
CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force
CLJ	Constitutional Loya Jirga
CLP	Combat logistics patrol
CMO	Construction Management Organization
CMT	Construction Management Team
CNN	Cable News Network
CO	Commanding Officer
COIN	Counterinsurgency
COP	Combat Outpost
CPEP	Central Poppy Eradication Program
CSOR	Canadian Special Operations Regiment
CSTC-A	Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan
CSYEP	Culturally Structured Youth Employment Program
CTF	Combined Task Force
CTKC	Combined Team Kandahar City
DAFA	Demining Agency for Afghanistan
DAGR	Defence Advanced Global Positioning System (GPS) Receiver, a Canadian GPS system
DCC	District Community Council
DCO	Deputy Commanding Officer
DComd	Deputy Commander
DDA	District Development Assembly
DDCT	Dand District Combat Team

DDD	District Delivery Program
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DEVAD	Development Advisor
DFAIT	Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
DFFC	Directionally focused fragmentation charge
DND	Department of National Defence
DST	District Stability or Stabilization Team
EBO	Effects-based operations
ECM	Electronic countermeasures
ECP	Entry control points
ECS	Engineer Construction Squadron
ECT	Engineer Construction Team
EDD	Explosive detection dog team
EOD	Explosive ordnance disposal
EROC	Expedient route-opening capability
ESU	Engineer Support Unit
ETT	Embedded Training Team
Eurocorps	European Corps
EW	Electronic warfare
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Agency
FDD	Focused District Development
FOB	Forward Operating Base
FOO/FAC	Forward observation officer/forward air controller
GBU	Guided bomb unit
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

GMIC	Government Media and Information Centre
GMLRS	Guided multiple-launch rocket system
HALO	Hostile Artillery Locating
HELQUEST	Helicopter Request Message
HESH	High-explosive squash-head (munition)
HFA	Haji Fazluddin Agha
HiG	Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin
HME	Home-made explosive
HQ	Headquarters
HSU	Health Service Unit
HTT	Human Terrain Team
IC	International community
ID	Identification
ICATS	ISAF Contract Air Transport Support
ICEPAK	ISAF Coordination Element Pakistan
IDLG	Independent Directorate for Local Governance
IDP	Internally displaced person
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IED	Improvised explosive device
IFF	Identification friend or foe
IFOR	Implementation Force
IJC	ISAF Joint Command
ILDS	Improved landmine detection system
Int	Intelligence
IO	Information operations

IPAP	Interim Provincial Action Plan
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
ISID	Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate
ISR	Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance
ISTAR	Intelligence, surveillance, target-acquisition and reconnaissance
JAG	Judge Advocate General
JDAMS	Joint direct-attack munition system
JDCC	Joint District Coordination Centre
JECB	Joint Effects Coordinating Board
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JOA	Joint operating area (ISAF)
JOC	Joint Operations Centre
JOG	Joint Operations Group
JP	Joint patrols
JPCC	Joint Provincial Coordination Centre
JPEL	Joint Prioritized Effects List
JTAC	Joint terminal air controller
JTF	Joint Task Force
JTF-A	Joint Task Force–Afghanistan
K-9	Dog team
KAF	Kandahar Airfield
KAP	Kandahar Action Plan
KC	Kandahar City
KCSWG	Kandahar City Security Working Group

KFC	Kandahar Fusion Centre
KIFC	Kandahar Intelligence Fusion Centre
KLE	Key leader engagement
KLIP	Kandahar Local Initiative Program
KMTC	Kabul Military Training Centre
KPRT	Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team
KTD	Key terrain districts
KUS	Kandahar Ulema Shura
KVA	Key Village Approach
KVI	Key Village Insurgent
LAV	Light armoured vehicle
LAW	Light Antitank Weapon
LCMD	Lightweight counter-mine detector
LCMR	Lightweight counter-mortar radar
LeT	Lashkar-e-Taiba
LLD	Light Logistics Detachment
LORIT	LAV Operational Requirements Integration Task
MASCAL	Mass casualty event
MASINT	Measurement and Signature Intelligence
M-ATV	MRAP all-terrain vehicle
MCLC	Mine-clearance line charge (micklick)
MDC	Mine Detection Centre
MEDEVAC	Medical evacuation
MEU	Marine Expeditionary Unit
MEWT	Mobile Electronic Warfare Team

MILAD	Military advisor
MMU	Multinational Medical Unit
MP	Military Police
MPMTT	Military Police Mobile Training Team
MRAP	Mine-resistant ambush-protected (vehicle)
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development
MSO	Municipal Support Office
MTTF	Mission Transition Task Force
MWR	Morale, welfare and recreation
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCCIS	National Command and Control and Information Systems
NDC	New District Centre
NDS	National Directorate of Security
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIS	National Investigative Service
NORSOF	Norwegian Special Operations Forces
NSE	National Support Element
NTM-A	NATO Training Mission–Afghanistan
OCC-D(D)	Operations Coordination Center–District (Dand)
OCC-D(P)	Operational Coordination Centre–District (Panjwayi)
OCC-D	Operational Coordination Center–District
OCC-K	Operational Coordination Center–Kandahar City
OCC-P	Operations Coordination Center–Province (replaced JPCC)
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Operational Detachment Alpha

ODRP	Office of the Defense Representative Pakistan
OEF	Operation ENDURING FREEDOM
OGD	Other government departments
OMLT	Operational Mentor and Liaison Team
OP	Observation post
Op	Operation
OPLAN	Operation Plan
OPORD	Operation order
OPP	Operations planning process
Op tempo	Operational tempo
OPV	Optionally piloted vehicle
OSC-A	Office of Security Cooperation–Afghanistan
PAG	Policy Action Group
PAKMIL	Pakistani military
PB	Patrol Base
PD	Police district
PDC	Provincial Development Committee
PECOC	Panjwayi East Combined Operations Centre
Pfc	Private First Class
PMN	A type of Soviet pressure-activated anti-personnel mine
PMT	Police Mentor Team
POC	Provincial Operations Centre
POLAD	Political Advisor
P-OMLT	Police Operational Mentor and Liaison Team
PPCLI	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry

PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PSS	Persistent surveillance system
PSS	Police sub-station
PSYOPS	Psychological operations
PTDS	Persistent threat-denial system
PTS	Program Takhim-e Sohl
QIP	Quick Impact Project
QRF	Quick Reaction Force
RASC	Rapid Accelerated Security Course
RBG(S)	Regional Battle Group (South)
RC	Regional Command
RC (South), RC(S)	NATO ISAF Regional Command (South)
RCIED	Radio-controlled improvised explosive device
RCP	Route clearance package
RIP	Relief in place
RoCK	Representative of Canada in Kandahar
RPAC	Regional Policing Assistance Command
RPG	Rocket-propelled grenade
RWS	Remote weapons system
SA	Situational awareness
SAT-A	Strategic Advisory Team–Afghanistan
SBPF	Security Belt Protection Force
SBS	Special Boat Squadron
SEAL	Sea, Air and Land, i.e, U.S. Navy special forces operators
SECFOR	OMLT Security Force

SET	Specialist Engineer Team
SFAT	Security Force Advisory Teams
SIGACT	Significant Action
SLTCA	Staff and Language Training Centre Afghanistan
SMA	Sher Mohammad Akhundzada
SNC	SNC-Lavalin Group Inc.
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOIC	Special Operations Intelligence Centre
SOTF	Special Operations Task Force
SRPF	Security Ring Protection Force
STA	Surveillance and target acquisition
Stab	Stabilization
SUAV	Small unmanned aerial vehicle
SVBIED	Suicide vehicle-borne IED
TAA	Tactical assembly area
TACNET	Tactical air control network
TACSAT	Tactical satellite; i.e., a type of crypto-capable radio
TAV	Tactical assistance visit
TET	Tactical Exploitation Team
TF	Task Force
TFK	TF Kandahar
TFK/BG	Task Force Kandahar Battle Group
TFK/GDA	Task Force Kandahar Ground Defence Area
TFS FOM	Task Force Stryker Freedom of Movement (corridor)
THREATWARN	Threat warning

TI	Tactical infrastructure
TIC	Troops in contact
TLAV	Tracked light armoured vehicle
TMJ	Taj Mir Jawad Network
TOC	Tactical Operations Centre
TSB	Theatre Support Base
TSE	Theatre Support Element
TTP	Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan
TTP	Tactics, techniques and procedures
TUAV	Tactical unmanned aerial vehicle
UAV	Unmanned aerial vehicle
UGS	Unattended ground sensors
UIP	Unified Implementation Plan
UN	United Nations
UN HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNAMA	United Nations Mission in Afghanistan
UNAMIR	United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda
UNDP-ELECT	United Nations Development Program–Enhanced Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow
UNHCR	United Nations Commission on Human Rights
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMACA	United Nations Mine Awareness Centre
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNPA	United Nations Protected Area
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

USG	United States Government
USPI	United States Protection and Investigation
UTAMS	Unattended transient acoustic MASINT (measurement and signature intelligence) system
UXO	Unexploded ordnance
VBIED	Vehicle-borne improvised explosive device
VHF	Very high frequency
VMO	Village Medical Outreach
VR	Voter Registration
VSO	Village Stability Operations
WHO	World Health Organization
WHOPPER	Whole of Government Panjwayi Program for Enhanced Revitalization (or Reconstruction)
WMD	Weapons of mass destruction
XO	Executive Officer

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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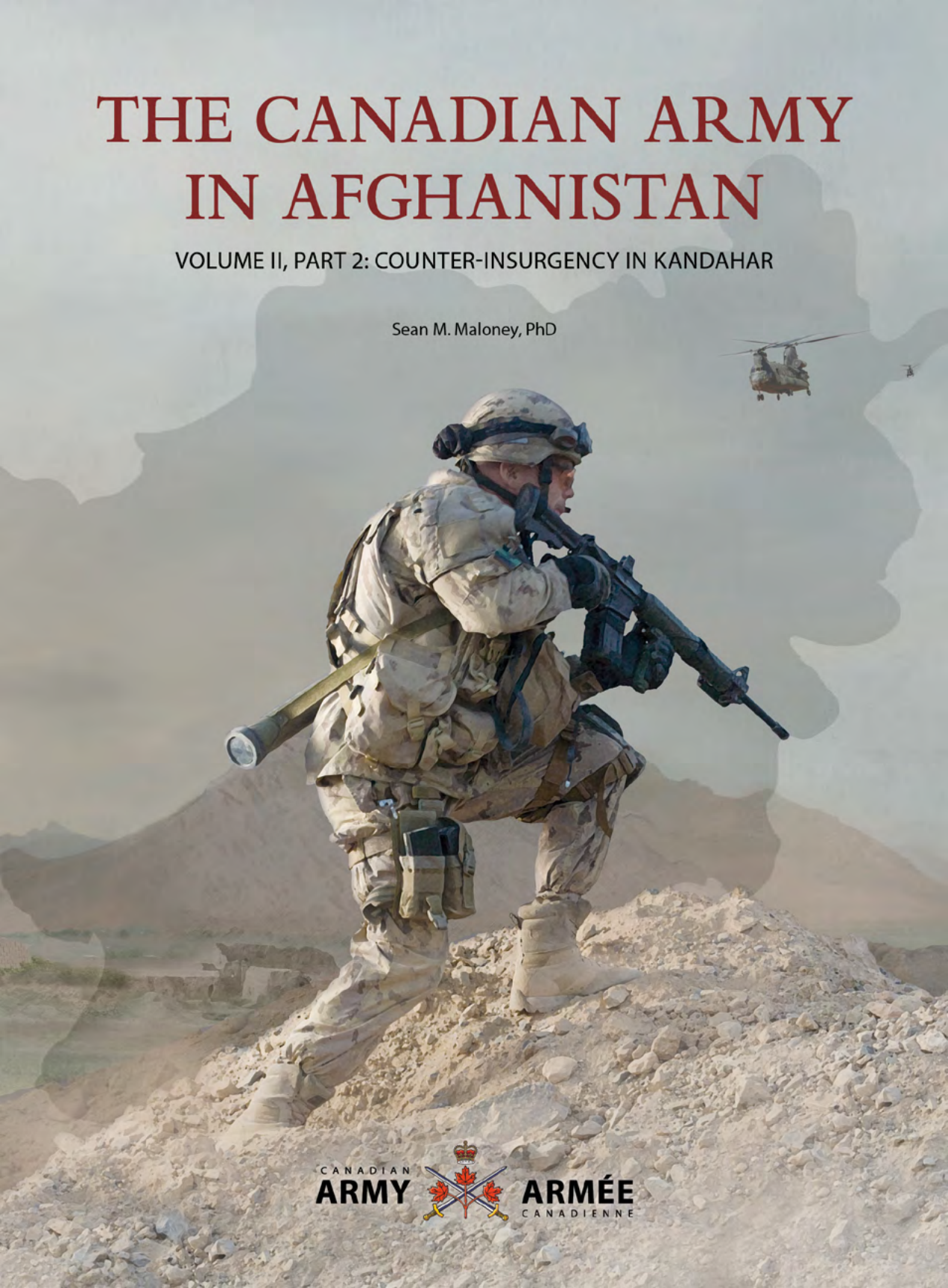
Sean M. Maloney, PhD



CANADIAN ARMY ARMÉE CANADIENNE

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VOLUME II, PART2: COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN KANDAHAR

Sean M. Maloney, PhD

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INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Army's odyssey in Kandahar Province continued into 2009 with the hand-over from BGen Denis Thompson to BGen Jon Vance. With crucial strategic issues unresolved at the coalition level and confronted with increasingly disconnected Canadian aims, Joint Task Force Afghanistan took the initiative and forged ahead with an approach developed by the Vance headquarters team during its work up training in the latter half of 2008.

This headquarters contained officers who had experience from the 2006 deployment, personnel who retained personal and professional interest as the situation in Afghanistan evolved in the intervening two years. Equally important was BGen Vance and his team's receptiveness to advice and commentary from sources that had real (as opposed to theoretical) experience with Afghanistan, and specifically, experience with Kandahar Province and its discontents. These sessions were instrumental in transitioning the concepts developed in June 2008 to a concrete plan by December 2008. Constant observation of events on the ground in January-February 2009 further refined this new approach. In essence, the Vance headquarters hit the ground running and moved rapidly to take advantage of the pre-harvest period to set the conditions for success and generate space so that momentum could be regained in 2009.

CHAPTER FIVE

KEY VILLAGE APPROACHES:

FEBRUARY–AUGUST 2009

From 2006 to 2008, Task Force Kandahar fought a disruption campaign west of Kandahar City while the international community struggled to implement a viable strategy to assist Afghanistan. Challenged constantly in the key districts of the province by Canadian and Afghan forces, and worn down by special operations forces and American airpower integrated into the Canadian effort, the Taliban leaders could not achieve their objectives. By the end of 2008, they were forced to pause and reconsider their approach, and the resulting stalemate lasted into early 2009.

By the fall of 2008, Washington had come to accept that more American forces were needed to deal with the insurgency, but full implementation of this strategy had to wait until several months after the American national elections. It was clear by spring 2009 that the Americans would reinforce the effort in Afghanistan massively, but it was less evident exactly how or where that would play out. Over the next four chapters, we will see how the American influx in Kandahar Province altered the trajectory of the Canadian effort.

Despite the new Canadian strategy for Afghanistan, implementation of the Canadian agenda in Kandahar Province was fragmenting to the point of irrelevance. Little or no synergy existed between Joint Task Force Afghanistan and the activities of some of the other Canadian government departments working in Kandahar Province. If Kandahar City were lost to the insurgency, then none of the reconstruction and development aspects of the Canadian program mattered. As BGen Jon Vance put it, "You could achieve 100 percent on all of those benchmarks and you could still lose the insurgency."[1]

In 2009, the Canadian effort began to lose prominence in Afghanistan. As JTF Afghanistan's area of responsibility shrank and the ratio of Canadian to American forces and aid funding decreased, so did Canada's ability to project influence in the Kandahar provincial environment. The Strategic Advisory Team–Afghanistan (SAT-A) had been dismantled in 2008, so the loss of primacy in Kandahar Province sharpened the decline in Canada's ability to generate strategic influence in Kabul. The heady days of Canadian involvement in the Afghan National Development Strategy and the Policy Action Group, and of Canadian command of Regional Command (South), were well in the past. On the other hand, the greater concentration and integration of Canadian resources in certain

districts that began in 2009 did achieve tactical and operational effects. Given this situation, what could the incoming Canadian headquarters and its two successors realistically expect to accomplish before the announced pull-out date of July 2011?

Strategic Dimensions

The transition from the second Bush administration to the first Obama administration highlighted the unresolved issues surrounding American strategy in Afghanistan, and the question of continuity of effort arose time and again. The first unresolved issue involved identifying and determining the most appropriate focus of the American effort: should the United States work to influence events in Pakistan, in Afghanistan, or in both countries at the same time? The Bush administration had already decided to step up cross-border activity against certain safe havens in Pakistan with a modest program that quadrupled the number of Predator strikes from four to 20 and added some limited special forces operations, with the estimated result of seven of 20 top Al Qaeda leaders killed throughout 2008.[2] The second issue was the request for 30,000 additional American troops for security operations to support the 2009 Afghan national elections, made by two successive commanders of the International Security Assistance Force, Generals Dan McNeill and David McKiernan.[3]

The third issue was the deteriorating relationship between the international community and President Karzai's administration. The mechanisms established to coordinate action between the Afghan government and the various assisting nations and international organizations, notably the Policy Action Group and the Joint Coordination and Management Board, were all dismantled in 2008 at Karzai's behest. An attempt by the British to anoint one of their diplomats as the senior "international" in Kabul failed dramatically, damaging Britain's relationship with Karzai. Some believed that Karzai was being deceived by his own advisors, or otherwise manipulated by anti-Western entities. Others thought he might be distancing himself to take up a position that would be advantageous in future peace talks. In any event, the situation in Kabul was progressively worse going into 2009.[4] (The fallback position for international discourse was an informal grouping of the American, British and Canadian ambassadors in Kabul, but the closure of SAT-A in August 2008 may have undermined Canadian influence with the Karzai government at this crucial time.)

Based in part on these problems, and in part on high-profile attacks by Pakistan-based terrorists against Indian targets in the region, the Bush administration initiated a strategy review in the summer of 2008. The Lute Report, which arrived in November 2008 during the American election campaign, stated that too many agencies were waging uncoordinated wars in Afghanistan, resulting in complete stalemate. Any solution to the Afghanistan problem had to start with Pakistan (by no means a new observation); the Afghan government

was too corrupt to be legitimate; and narcotics production had to be reduced significantly. This statement of the obvious was subsumed by the change in administration. Ultimately, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael G. Mullen, told President-elect Obama that there was, in fact, no strategy.[5] This assertion was incorrect. As we have seen in previous chapters, there was both a national and a military strategy in Afghanistan, but they were not American-made, and they were under-resourced by both NATO and the international community.

The new request for 30,000 more troops for elections security was submerged in larger attempts by the Obama administration to formulate an approach to Afghanistan. Was it worthwhile to invest another 30,000 troops, even temporarily, when the United States had yet to decide on the direction it should take in the region? Another strategy assessment was initiated, with a due date of March 2009. Meanwhile, an acrimonious meeting between Karzai and Vice President Biden that touched on — among other issues — the illicit activities of Ahmad Wali Karzai, the leader of the Kandahar Provincial Council, escalated into a threat that the United States might not send any more troops at all.[6] Another meeting with President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan proved to be a damp squib. The Obama administration was stuck; they could commit more American forces now, or wait for the strategy review. Concerned that insurgents would disrupt the 2009 Afghan elections, on 17 February 2009 President Obama announced that 17,000 more American troops would deploy to Afghanistan and increased the number of Predator strikes against targets in Pakistan.[7]

At the same time in early 2009, the senior American staff handling the Afghanistan file underwent a complete shake-up that reached even the pro-eradication American ambassador, William "Chemical Bill" Wood, and the ISAF commander, Gen David McKiernan. Meanwhile, administration newcomers were generating more and more friction with Karzai through public and private statements questioning his ability to continue leading Afghanistan. This discord exacerbated an already serious situation and alienated an already isolated man; note, however, that not all the critics were wrong, especially those focused on the career of Ahmad Wali Karzai. The literature on this subject depicts a situation rife with crosscutting personality clashes that hindered the Americans' effort to sort themselves out on Afghanistan, even if an acceptable strategy could be found.[8] The Canadian task force in Kandahar continued to hold the line and provide breathing room while the new American administration struggled to gain purchase.

The Riedel strategy review published in early March 2009 reminded readers that the purpose of the Afghanistan effort was to assist the anti-Al Qaeda effort in Pakistan. In Pakistan, Islamist insurgent groups, including the Taliban, shielded Al Qaeda much as the Taliban had harboured Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, a situation that produced instability in Pakistan. Any measures to defeat Al Qaeda in Pakistan had to prevent Al Qaeda from

returning to Afghanistan; therefore, as well as assistance to Pakistani security forces, the effort would require a better-resourced counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan. The Riedel strategy review also acknowledged that elements of the Pakistani security forces supported the Taliban in Afghanistan, and suggested a variety of carrot-and-stick responses to be directed against the Pakistani government and other elements as required. On 20 March 2009, President Obama accepted the basic tenets of the Riedel strategy review and gave his subordinates until 2011 to make it work. For that, a new command team was desired. As part of that change, ISAF commander Gen David McKiernan was out and Gen Stanley McChrystal was in. Not to be pushed by the administration into precipitous action, McChrystal took the time to produce his own assessment of the situation in Afghanistan.[9]

After weathering Taliban attempts to influence the Canadian national election, the Harper government was re-elected in mid-October 2008, and the March 2008 motion that had extended Canadian military operations until July 2011 remained in place.[10] Outwardly, little changed: the six Cabinet priorities and three signature projects still represented Canadian objectives in Afghanistan. Internally, however, the situation was somewhat tumultuous. There was even greater emphasis on increasing the civilian components of the Canadian mission and, especially, on enhancing the public profile of their contributions, regardless of efficacy. This familiar theme would dominate the events of 2009, reflecting a failed coordination effort back in Ottawa that was likely rooted in personality conflicts as much as anything.

On 1 March 2009, however, Prime Minister Stephen Harper told an American journalist on CNN, "We're not going to ever defeat the insurgency. My reading of Afghan history is that it's probably had an insurgency forever of some kind."[11] This quote was reported by global media outlets without context, and other allies involved in Afghanistan used it for their own purposes to question the veracity of Canada's commitment. Historically inaccurate and defeatist, the remark undermined Canadian morale in Afghanistan and drove a wedge between some American and Canadian officers working in multinational headquarters. Opponents of Canadian involvement even used this quote to question Canada's sacrifices in Afghanistan. In the field, some soldiers wondered what they were fighting for and whether they were dying in vain. For some Canadian officers, it confirmed the presence of, at worst, a strategic vacuum or, at best, a failure in Ottawa to understand the psychological aspects of warfare. Why should Canadian soldiers continue to fight if their own leaders did not think they could succeed?[12]

This stance posed problems for the incoming headquarters and its units. As one study noted,

> It also meant that efforts of TFK HQ in 2009 were politically unsupported because it was not deemed appropriate to change the course of the mission so close to completion, despite the fact that its current course would continue to produce thwarted efforts and result in the death of Canadians and Afghans alike … Successes of the Canadian mission in Afghanistan were never effectively publicized and therefore the iconic image for the mission was the "Ramp Ceremony".[13]

When all of these factors were combined, the Canadian effort in 2009 was not off to a good start. Was there any way to recover the lost ground?

Handover: Thompson to Vance

Led by BGen Jonathan Vance, the incoming Task Force Kandahar Headquarters arrived in late February 2009. Outwardly, the Vance headquarters resembled its predecessors in that it was designed to handle the diverse elements of the Canadian contribution in Afghanistan: the battle group, the Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (OMLT), the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), the JTF Afghanistan Air Wing (also known as Task Force Silver Dart) and the National Support Element (NSE), plus an American infantry battalion. But the Vance headquarters arrived out of phase with the rest of Task Force 1-09 as the relief in place was scheduled for April. The two-month overlap gave the new headquarters staff time to get the lay of the land, wind down the exhausted out-going task force, and prepare to adjust and implement concepts that they had worked out while preparing to deploy.

The Vance headquarters included veterans of Combined Task Force Aegis — Maj Quentin Innis, Maj Harjit Sajjan and Capt Darcy Heddon among them — with extensive experience in planning, analysis and influence operations. Understanding the Canadian intelligence community's limitations, BGen Vance and his staff built several organizations to supplement the work of the All Source Intelligence Centre, which maintained a tactical focus on insurgent networks in the province. These new structures included a "white situational awareness" cell and a group dedicated to conducting detailed link analyses of the Kandahari power structure. Operations research analysts were also brought in to support the staff. The unwieldy Effects-Based Operations machinery of previous rotations was replaced with a more streamlined process. Psychological operations and influence operations moved to the J3 under LCol Michael B. Patrick, who integrated them into his Ops team. Finally, the Vance headquarters benefitted from a potent J5 structure under the leadership of LCol Lee J. Hammond.

Photo Credit: Author

BGen Vance and his staff brought a new approach to dealing with the discontents of the districts west of Kandahar City, but found themselves hindered by Canadian bureaucratic politics almost as much as by the insurgency. They regained vital momentum with the Deh-e Bagh experiment.

At Camp Nathan Smith, a new Representative of Canada in Kandahar (RoCK), Ken Lewis, took over from Elissa Golberg. Tall, greying and energetic, Lewis quickly discerned that there were substantial personality and structural issues between the civilians from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) — collectively referred to as the "other government departments" or OGDs — and the military leadership of the headquarters. Where exactly did the RoCK fit? In reality, the RoCK did not command the OGDs in parallel with the commander of TF Kandahar; he was a coordinator like the PRT Director. At the same time, TF Kandahar had no command authority over the PRT; theoretically, the PRT reported to ISAF in Kabul, but the civilians actually reported to their departments back in Ottawa,[14] and took their direction from the Kandahar Action Plan and its successor documents. There was no civilian equivalent of command in its military sense, and the only way to synchronize the OGDs' activities with military operations was through coordinating meetings and personal contacts. This liaison and coordination were conducted between the J5 Branch of the headquarters and the civilian OGD representatives at both the TF Kandahar headquarters and the PRT.[15]

TF Kandahar's relationship with Regional Command (South) remained problematic. Regional Command (South) was commanded by Maj Gen Mart de Kruif of the Netherlands, and many key positions in the Operations and Plans branches of the headquarters were held by British officers. BGen Vance and his staff rapidly learned that Kandahar City and Kandahar Province may have been vital ground but, for Regional Command (South), the main effort was in Helmand. Vance's officers, especially those who had served with CTF Aegis in 2006, decried the ongoing British obsession with counter-narcotics operations in Helmand, not least because operations in Kandahar were constantly rescheduled around the availability of helicopters and ISTAR assets for which Helmand took priority.

In this, Regional Command (South) was supported by the new ISAF commander, Gen Stanley McChrystal. In his 2013 memoirs, Gen McChrystal justified the Helmand focus by arguing that "Helmand was where our forces already were", and that he was interested in some form of success in information operations. Additionally, "President Karzai's government naturally wanted to allow more Pashtuns to vote by securing Helmand," which in turn would "enhance Afghan confidence, or at least increase their involvement, in the governance of their own nation." Furthermore, the ISAF commander believed that, "while Kandahar's security was a serious concern as the districts around the city were enflamed, it was not besieged or in imminent danger of falling."[16]

This backhanded compliment to three and half years of Canadian-led efforts in Kandahar Province notwithstanding, Gen McChrystal was convinced that the situation in Helmand was worse. Some Canadian officers believed that McChrystal was overly influenced by his British advisors, with whom he had more affinity because he had served with British troops in Iraq. Canadians in Kabul were not straining themselves to make a counter-argument for Kandahar, however.[17]

Regional Command (South) even took control of an American route-clearance battalion operating in Kandahar and reassigned most of it "temporarily" to Helmand. This was a new manifestation of an old problem, and the Kandahar Air Field Cigar Club remained open for business. The situation was mitigated to a great extent by BGen Vance's willingness to build on established information relationships and, importantly, facilitate his staff's informal connectivity with incoming American units that controlled the vital enablers. For example, both LCol Mike Gilmore, the Task Force Engineer, and the commander of Task Force Thor, the American route-clearance outfit, were cigar aficionados, and almost everyone in both camps liked Alberta beef. Barbecues led to "handshake con" and "bubba con" access to more aviation coverage, increased daily route-clearance patrols in Canadian areas of operation, and more ISTAR assets when needed. The British could be as adroit and focused in their aims but, once Canadians caught on, mitigation strategies were available to those who dared to employ them.[18]

The Operational Mentor and Liaison Team: Changing Focus

The incoming OMLT commanded by Col Gregory Burt had to shift on the fly to adapt to the rapidly changing situation in Kandahar. LCol Joe Shipley handed over command of the OMLT in March 2009, passing on the football trophy signed by the previous OMLT commanders with the admonition, "Don't drop the ball!" Under LCol Shipley, the OMLT had achieved a steady state with BGen Abdul Basir and the troops of 1-205 Brigade ANA; the kandaks could conduct framework operations and their sustainment capacity had improved. The familiar red-yellow-green training and readiness cycle was abandoned as more and more Afghan troops moved into Kandahar Province. Each kandak received a new company, while preparations for the arrival of a sixth kandak were under way.

In April 2009, 1-205 Brigade had 1st Kandak in Zharey District, 2nd Kandak on leave and about to return, and 3rd Kandak spread out from Mushan in Panjwayi District to Jelawur in Arghandab District. The combat support unit, 4th Kandak, was in Camp Hero, with its D-30 artillery battery at Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar. No longer bound by the red-yellow-green rotation system by the summer of 2009, 1-205 Brigade deployed all three of its rifle kandaks: 1st Kandak in Zharey, 2nd Kandak in Panjwayi, and 3rd Kandak in Kandahar City and Arghandab[19] (see Figure 5-1).

Initially, the OMLT could mentor two infantry kandaks with three company-level teams each plus a team at each kandak headquarters, but in 2009 this commitment increased to all three infantry kandaks. Like his predecessors, Col Burt mentored BGen Basir. BGen Vance wanted more policing resources in Kandahar City, so he departed from precedent by moving the Police Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (P-OMLT) to the PRT. As in previous rotations, Camp Hero hosted Canadian mentoring activities focussed on engineering, explosives ordnance disposal (EOD), logistics and medical functions, usually with personnel drawn from Canadian units at KAF and coordinated by the OMLT. Tactically, the company-level teams were reorganized under Col Burt to accommodate increased demands for force protection; his company-level OMLT teams now consisted of eight soldiers instead of four. The additional personnel were scrounged from the rest of the incoming task force through requests for volunteers.[20]

With more Afghan National Army units in Kandahar, and the sketchiness of their formation-level skills, this OMLT rotation had to focus on planning at the brigade and kandak levels while also maintaining their mentoring capability at company level. Col Burt set himself the task of "assist[ing] in the force employment and capability development of 1-205th Brigade in order to progress it towards executing independent operations synchronized with other partners."[21] That meant working not only with BGen Basir to build up his planning capacity but also with 1-205 Brigade to improve its ability to mount complex operations, especially in terms of sustainment. In particular, Col Burt wanted to develop

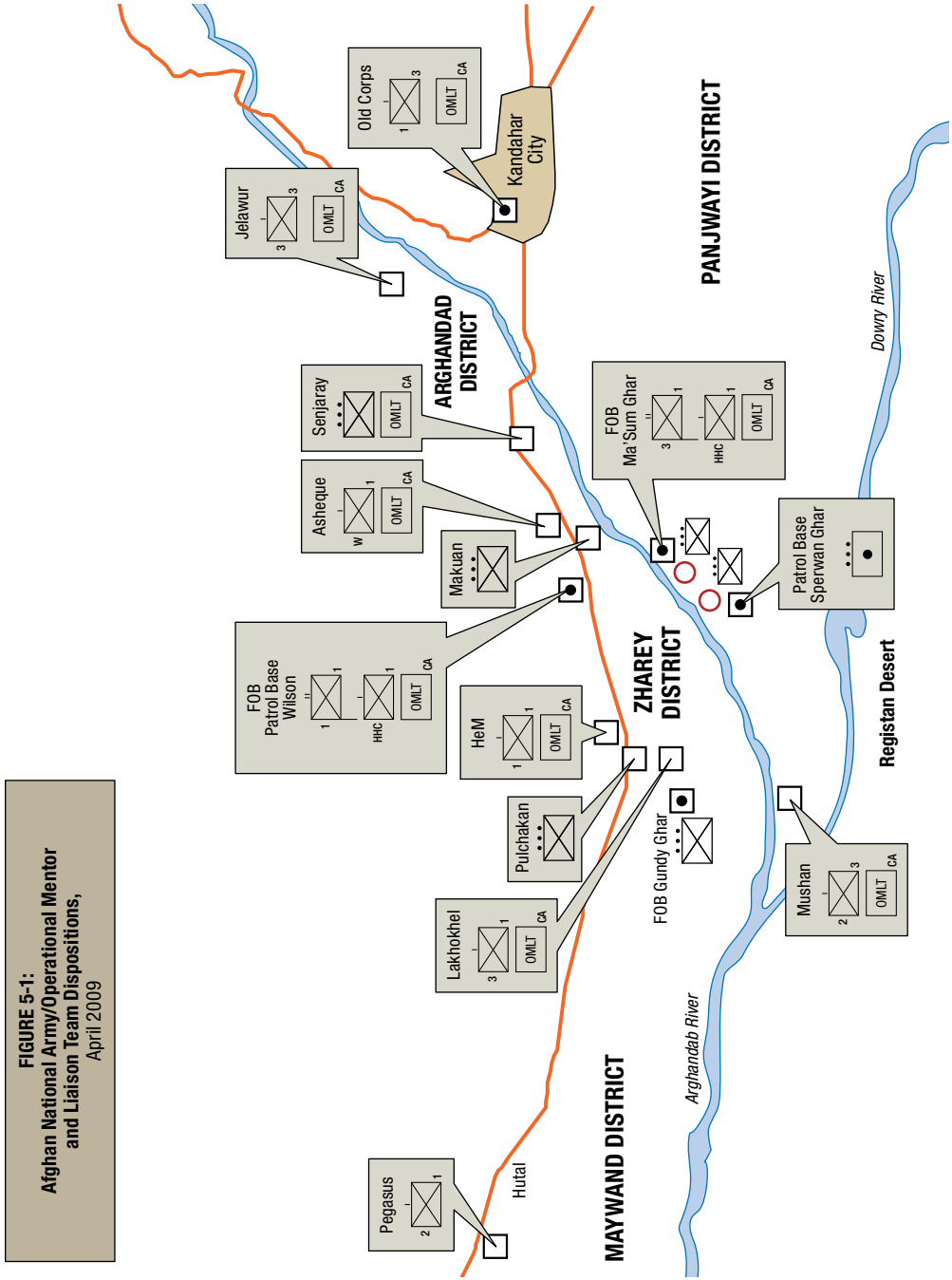

Figure 5-1: Afghan National Army/Operational Mentor and Liaison Team Dispositions, April 2009

Photo Credit: Author

As more and more Afghan National Army units arrived in Kandahar Province, the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team shifted to improving unit-level planning and operations. This is an ANA sketch of positions in Panjwayi District.

the intellectual, as opposed to physical, domain. The OMLT's secondary responsibility was ensuring that Canadian and Afghan operations were "harmonized"; for example, Basir was briefed on Operation Plan KANTOLO so he could decide how those operations would affect his dispositions and intent. Burt and Vance wanted the ANA in Kandahar to be able to sustain itself autonomously, continue to trend upward in improving its capabilities, and retain the hard-won credibility it had achieved with both the local people and ISAF.[22]

The crucial role the OMLT played as intermediary between the battle group and the kandaks in the Canadian area of operations increased in importance as the battle group adopted a more dispersed posture in eastern Panjwayi and western Dand districts. Before, the battle group and the local kandak would coordinate their activities for offensive operations and then return to their respective steady states, but now they were practically living cheek by jowl. Col Burt encapsulated his mentoring philosophy as "[t]he Wisdom of Solomon, the Courage of David, and the Patience of Job," which translated well into Afghan religious culture.[23]

The American influx gave cause for concern. The OMLT was already providing liaison between TF Kandahar and 1-205 Brigade, and the arrival of the Stryker Brigade presented the challenge of potential command confusion: Canadian mentors with Afghan companies in American battle space. The Canadian OMLT managed to ease the Stryker Brigade in, with Col Burt working with Col Harry Tunnell to build a personal relationship with BGen Basir.[24]

There were several problems, however, within the Afghan chain of command. The first was the Afghans' tendency to compress tactical, operational and strategic levels into one, with the result that the Ministry of Defence might intervene in company-level operations. For example, in the first iteration of Operation ATAL in Kandahar City, after the Sarposa prison break in June 2008, troops arrived from Kabul without coordination, and corps commanders dispersed companies. Another example involved tactical meddling by the 205 Corps Commander. On one occasion, a retired *mujahid* related to the commander of 205 Corps demanded help to retrieve a mutual kinsman who had been kidnapped, so 205 Corps ordered 1-205 Brigade to deploy a whole kandak for this mission on the eve of a major operation in Panjwayi District. The Canadians worked to separate the command levels so that 205 Corps connected to Regional Command (South) and the Ministry of Defence talked to ISAF, leaving TF Kandahar to deal with 1-205 Brigade.[25]

And most importantly, Afghan kandaks and their Canadian mentors would no longer be hived off to support British operations in Helmand. BGen Vance and Col Burt held firm on this but, when 1-205 Brigade was instructed to establish and protect polling stations in Khakrez for the upcoming elections, this new policy posed serious problems for TF Kandahar headquarters, which had staved off many past attempts by 205 Corps to deploy units of 1-205 Brigade to Ghorak and other northern districts. 1-205 Brigade strained to sustain this task, and an entire infantry company was deployed on the mission for months with their mentors. Throughout this tour, 205 Corps remained a significant source of interference.[26]

When all was said and done, however, 1-205 Brigade mounted six brigade-sized operations in 2009, including three security operations in Kandahar City and a major sweep operation in Senjaray. 1-205 Brigade also led the planning for elections security, working closely with the critical Operations Coordination Centre–Province (OCC-P) team at the governor's palace. In addition, when the decision was made to cease operations in Mushan, 1-205 Brigade led the operation to remove the strong point and realign its forces.[27]

The Canadian mentors at kandak level continued to live and work alongside their Afghan counterparts, prepared to bring fire and close-air support and medical evacuation to bear when necessary. The Afghan companies in their strong points deployed every morning for anti-IED route sweeps, a task made all the more dangerous by the antipersonnel mines

the insurgents had begun laying to protect their larger IEDs. When the route sweeps were completed, the Afghan soldiers conducted mounted and dismounted patrols in the vicinity of the tactical infrastructure. When a larger operation was on the agenda, the Canadian RG-31s and the Ford Ranger pick-up trucks of the ANA deployed the troops to their start lines, sometimes in conjunction with police but usually alongside companies of the Canadian battle group. And the war continued.

The Joint Task Force Afghanistan Air Wing and Aviation Operations

By February 2009, the build-up of the JTF Afghanistan Air Wing under Col Chris Coates and his staff and crews had reached "initial operational capability" — the point where operations could begin. Dubbed Task Force Silver Dart, the formation comprised the Canadian Helicopter Force (Afghanistan) with Chinooks and Griffons; the Sperwer Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (TUAV) squadron; the Canadian Heron Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Detachment; and the Theatre Support Element with its CC-130 Hercules transports.

The Engineer Support Unit made Canadian helicopter operations possible. KAF had only so much ramp space, and the base was already handling 5,000 flights a day. If Canada wanted to conduct its own air operations, ramp space had to be built; it could not be borrowed from anybody else. The Engineer Support Unit's expertise in dealing with Afghan contractors and some skillful stiff-arming of glacial Ottawa-based bureaucracy paid dividends, and X-Ray Ramp was ready on time. It was simple: no ground facilities, no air operations.[28]

The recovery of the lost Canadian airmobile capability was facilitated in discreet ways with allied assistance. The CH-147 Chinooks came from American units in Afghanistan. The CH-146 Griffons, now equipped with M-134D Dillon Gatling guns, were a new system for Canada. The Department of State Air Wing operating from KAF also used the M-134D, and provided welcome advice. The Royal Air Force also provided theatre-specific information on Chinook operations as well as advice on their airmobile doctrine.[29]

By March, TF Silver Dart was significantly augmenting Canadian capabilities in Kandahar Province. Small airmobile operations were now possible. Ground combat logistics patrols from KAF to the forward operating bases were considerably reduced. Both types of operations reduced exposure to IEDs. Counter-IED capability was significantly enhanced; Griffons and Herons flew night over-watch missions on the main service routes as the American OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters had in 2008. All Canadian UAVs were used to cue air and artillery strikes on insurgents caught laying IEDs. TF Kandahar could now deploy Counter-IED Squadron exploitation teams and National Investigative Service officers to IED strike sites without going through Regional Command (South). Finally, the

Canadians could conduct their own "angel flights" to recover their dead, although medical evacuations were still handled by the specialized and highly experienced U.S. Air Force and U.S. Army HH-60 and UH-60 units stationed at KAF.

In April 2009, after six years of hard service in Afghanistan, the Sperwer TUAVs were retired and their crews, made up from the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery and the Royal Canadian Air Force, shut down operations at their southwestern KAF launch site. There were now more ScanEagle SUAVs, enough for three lines of operations per day in addition to the coverage provided by CU-170 Herons, MQ-1 Predators and MQ-9 Reapers.

Several functions usually performed by air formations remained outside the purview of TF Silver Dart. The ScanEagle SUAVs were still tasked by the battle group, and TF Kandahar continued its close relationship with the 451st Expeditionary Air Group of the U.S. Air Force and its UAVs. The battle group and TF Kandahar Headquarters did not agree on who employed the MQ-1 Predators and MQ-9 Reapers cut to Canada by the U.S. Air Force, but the established process — involving a forward air controller, a gunner, a lawyer and the battle group commander's deputy, all working from the battle group's Tactical Operations Centre — remained in place.

The Canadians' close relationship with Task Force Eagle Assault ended in January 2009, when the Americans reorganized their aviation forces for the influx. The new American helicopter force was the 4th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, known as Task Force Wings, led by LTC James Benson. Consisting of four companies operating the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior, AH-64 Apache, UH-60 Blackhawk and CH-47 Chinook helicopters, TF Wings was part of the 159th Combat Aviation Brigade, an American formation mostly dedicated to operations in Regional Command (East). The informal relationship that developed between TF Eagle Assault and TF Kandahar continued with BGen Vance and LTC Benson, and the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters of TF Wings worked alongside the Canadian Griffons on the crucial counter-IED route-security tasks.

TF Silver Dart had its teething troubles. Rotor erosion nearly grounded the Griffons before the problem was identified and solved. The Canadian supply system had difficulty acquiring the correct lubricants for the Chinooks, while the new Herons encountered technical issues with their IFF (Identification Friend or Foe) systems. Often working informally with allies, the mechanics and technicians kept the aircraft flying and the troops on the ground supported.[30]

Col Bruce Ploughman, an experienced maritime helicopter pilot, took over TF Silver Dart in May 2009, when the nascent formation had developed enough that it was ready to mature in the Afghanistan environment. All the complex pieces of a military organization — procedures, communications, relationships with allied units and formations — had to be assimilated and passed on to the next rotation while the current

rotation was still learning them. During this challenging period, TF Silver Dart suffered its first casualties on 6 July 2009 with the loss of MCpl Patrice Audet of 430 Squadron and Cpl Martin Joannette of 3 R22eR in the crash of a CH-146 Griffon in Zabul Province.

One of the most significant developments of this time was increased army-air force integration in TF Kandahar through TF Silver Dart. Unlike the Sperwer TUAV team, in which soldiers worked with air force people from the tactical helicopter community, the Heron crews were all air force, drawn from squadrons operating the CP-140 Aurora maritime patrol aircraft. Most of these crews had worked with ground forces only when conducting limited tests in applying Aurora sensors to the ground environment. They had no idea how ground operations were contextualized, structured or commanded, so an "Army 101" course was run for two weeks. Another important change was a philosophical movement away from scheduling aircraft like buses. The deeper concepts underpinning why and how they were to be used to support the battle had to be understood by all involved.[31]

On the army side, the battle group had to give up two bilateral relationships, its link to the TUAV detachment (now ended) and its connection with its forward air controllers, to form what some called the "triangle of love" — the cooperation between the tactical air control party, the Heron controllers, and the aviation operations staff to support the battle group commander and his staff at their Tactical Operations Centre. Col Ploughman and his staff worked closely with BGen Vance to push understanding of Heron capabilities all the way down to platoon level, and worked on ways to get the platoon and company commanders to know they could ask for support when they required it. This was a major departure from the old HELQUEST system, with which a low-level ground commander would ask, hoping against hope, whether he *might* get lift, usually did not, and ended up cursing the air force.[32]

Like all the other units and supporting arms, TF Silver Dart conducted daily framework surveillance operations. This was tedious work, but it influenced enemy freedom of movement. The insurgents learned very rapidly that almost anything flying could cue an airstrike or artillery if its crew could make a positive identification. Ironically, the more ISAF tactical infrastructure a district had, the more likely it was to be resupplied by air. That meant greater air presence, which suppressed insurgent freedom of movement and forced them to adapt their operations. In time, the insurgents started to move about individually during the day and, when in groups, usually no larger than three or four fighters. TF Silver Dart prepared for push-back in the form of anti-aircraft artillery, assuming that the Taliban would exploit the predictability of resupply operations. Heavy machine guns appeared in Zharey to engage some of the Americans' OH-58D Kiowa Warriors, but anti-helicopter operations were rare and no one used surface-to-air missiles. During this critical period, TF Silver Dart eventually added its capabilities to the web of sensors and shooters expanding over the western rural districts.

Finally, TF Silver Dart took part in Operation APPLANIX, the deployment of CP-140 Aurora maritime patrol aircraft to Kandahar Province to acquire the data and imagery required to make high-quality tactical maps. The maps available to the ground troops were not detailed enough for counterinsurgency operations. On a 1:50,000-scale map, a cluster of Afghan compounds might look like a brown blob with a place name — not enough granularity when specific compounds had to be identified, labeled, catalogued, and monitored for hostile activity. In the past, the Canadian Forces Mapping and Charting Establishment had a relationship with an American team that collected geological information with an NP-3D Orion aircraft,[33] but that capability had long since departed, leaving a critical gap.

The first Canadian mapping mission over Afghanistan was flown by LCol James Irvine on 13 May 2009 in a CP-140 Aurora carrying a team of 12 from the Mapping and Charting Establishment and their Applanix mobile mapping and positioning camera system. Over several days, the Auroras mapped Helmand, Kandahar, Oruzgan and Zabul provinces, and certain areas of Kandahar City. Dodging sandstorms, civilian airliners, and aerial refuelling operations, the Desert Demons gathered exceptionally high-quality imagery, and collected so much data that Col Ploughman called an operational pause so it could all be processed. Most importantly, the data was turned into a product usable by TF Kandahar's ground forces within 11 days.[34]

Changes at the PRT

On 9 February 2009, LCol Carl Turenne took over the PRT from LCol Dana Woodworth, and the PRT and its operations changed significantly over the months that followed. The PRT was still responsible for enabling the Canadian civilian departments (the OGDs), acting as the battle-space commander in Kandahar City and reacting to incidents within its boundaries. By the end of the summer, however, the American influx had changed everything.

By this point, the PRT was suffering from the combined effects of organizational fluctuation and an insistence from elements in Ottawa that risk be reduced to zero. Both factors served to drive wedges between the military component and the "whole-of-government" partners on several levels. Some military personnel "thought the OGDs were gutless and did not want to go 'outside the wire'." The critics had to be closely 'gripped' by LCol Turenne, who reminded all hands that everyone at the PRT wanted to go out but the civilian departments in Ottawa were severely skittish about letting their people do so.[35]

A plan dubbed Rolling Start, then in the process of implementation, was designed in part to civilianize the PRT. It established the position of PRT Director, ostensibly reporting to the Representative of Canada in Kandahar, but no one could be found to fill it. As a result, the director post was a revolving door for several months, producing discontinuity. It was only with the arrival of Jess Dutton in July 2009 that the PRT achieved some semblance of stability.[36]

Under these conditions, LCol Turenne had to respond to the Vance Headquarters plans and also to resolve the substantial issues of how the Americans fit into the broader schema of reconstruction and development programming in Kandahar Province.

When Turenne took command, one of his first priorities was restructuring the military component of the PRT, which comprised a three-platoon force-protection company, a civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) company, plus the Specialist Engineer Team and an EOD-Counter-IED detachment. Using a concept conceived by LCol Woodworth, Turenne reorganized his troops to form two Stabilization Companies, known as Stab A and Stab B, one to work in Kandahar City and the other to support TF Kandahar's units Turenne believed that the previous rotation had focused on tactical CIMIC, and there was not enough linkage between tactical CIMIC and provincial-level programmes. This, as we have seen over the years, was not a new issue at the PRT.

Turenne was exceptionally concerned about those provincial-level programs. The CIDA, DFAIT and Correctional Service Canada teams, and the Canadian Civilian Police (CIVPOL) contingent, continued with their work and manning levels. Fortunately, the PRT Synchronization Board was still in place to handle coordination.

The PRT achieved important successes, but the requirement to capture and articulate them in a constrained reporting system meant that they remained obscure. For example, an activist four-man detachment from Correctional Service Canada instigated significant changes at Sarposa Prison: its corrupt warden was fired; its defences were improved; staff began collecting intelligence on and from the politically motivated prisoners; and staff training was improved. The PRT's most impressive change, achieved over time, was in the provincial education system, but there were problems communicating successes to a broader audience:

> You know how many people go to school in Kandahar City right now? 95,000, of those 35,000 are girls. How many girls went to school under the Taliban? Zero. We achieved that over a number of years … Did that achieve a stabilizing effect inside Kandahar City? Well, yeah, obviously. Is it measured anywhere? No. Is that captured anywhere? No. The Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is saying, "Can't you guys give me a clear picture of what you are achieving?" Well, USAID and CIDA don't work that way. Their type of programming works through third parties. They have a hard time because they don't have the resources to be able to exactly capture the effects they are achieving on the ground. Do you change their organization culture in like a year, a year and half, just because we want to achieve effects tomorrow morning?[37]

The Justice portfolio remained the PRT's "weakest link" because DFAIT under-resourced it. LCol Turenne recalled that "it's not like putting one 24-year old girl in as the head of the Justice file [will] change justice in Kandahar." For Turenne, the problem with development and the PRT was that

> The civilians were still not achieving cruising speed … in my view the civilians were very much focused on their little programming regardless of what was happening in the overall counterinsurgency effort … the fundamental problem [wasn't] the team itself, it was the fact that the team had to report up to Ottawa every night. And they didn't have freedom of action. They were told by the powers that be "You stick to the six Canadian priorities", but when you read the six Canadian priorities it doesn't talk about counterinsurgency. It doesn't talk about how it all fits into the overall ISAF strategy. Therefore, because it doesn't talk [about the insurgency], it doesn't exist.[38]

When BGen Vance reallocated the P-OMLT to the PRT, he added 60 Military Police and combat arms personnel to the PRT, increasing its military component to 450 all ranks, so the facilities at Camp Nathan Smith needed significant expansion. The policing "Tower of Babel" was also evolving in early 2009. By this point, the American Police Mentoring Teams had little or no focus, and hardly any coordination with the Canadian elements of the PRT. The P-OMLT team in Kandahar City came to be seen as unsustainable and was pushed out to the districts where Canadian forces were operating, all the while remaining under PRT command. The CIVPOL contingent conducted vital literacy and leadership training at Camp Nathan Smith, while the DynCorp operation at the Regional Training Centre was scrutinized by American auditors and investigators from the Special Inspector General for Reconstruction in Afghanistan. Eventually, CIVPOL was pulled out of the Regional Training Centre as part of a major regional police reorganization, but continued its work at Camp Nathan Smith and with the police in Kandahar City.[39]

The American civilian presence at the PRT was increased to prepare for the influx of American forces. Overnight, six more people arrived at Camp Nathan Smith to represent the U.S. State Department, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, adding a new layer of issues. How did the Americans and their substantially larger budgets fit in? Where did the new people fit into the PRT command structure? How did their activities relate to TF Kandahar's operations? There was friction, and no easy answers, in the first half of 2009. The Americans at the PRT generally viewed their Canadian counterparts as "too narrowly focused" on the Cabinet priorities and signature projects. The Canadian civilians' habit of spending their evenings on the phone with Ottawa, coupled with the amount of leave they took every eight weeks,

meant that American development personnel, who lived and worked in Afghanistan for one or two years at a stretch, were increasingly frustrated in their efforts to connect with their Canadian counterparts: "One of the biggest problems with the Canadian civilians was: they're not there." Eventually, the Americans started running their own activities in parallel with Canadian programs where possible.[40]

For the most part, however, LCol Turenne and the military component of the PRT supported a wide variety of development activity. For example, PRT reporting in February 2009 shows that all PRT elements attended regular coordination and planning meetings with their Afghan provincial-level counterparts, while the Specialist Engineer Team sortied regularly to assess infrastructure improvement contracts for the police, Kandahar University, and accompanied the Correctional Service Canada team at Sarposa Prison.[41] It is less clear what those meetings accomplished, but at least the Specialist Engineer Team could produce measurable results.

On the down side, the inclination of the various Canadian civilian entities to rely on third-party mechanisms to accomplish objectives using Canadian money had its drawbacks. One example involved the Afghan government's contracts with the non-governmental organization Afghan Health Delivery Services. Encouraged by UN organizations in Afghanistan, Afghan Health Delivery Services operated in areas not necessarily under the control of pro-government security forces.[42] The previously discussed problems of having a neutral entity deliver government programming in an insurgency continued to apply; while the NGO got the job done, its presence undermined public confidence in the government.

Governance and Development

The Canadian Army's involvement in provincial-level governance slowly decreased during the early months of 2009. The freedom of movement in those circles enjoyed by the Canadian commanders of 2005 and 2006 was waning, a result of several processes. First and foremost, the American influx meant that Canada's forces would be outnumbered, and the proportion of Canadian development and contracting funds, compared to what the Americans would bring, would be much smaller. Over time, these changes translated to substantially less influence.

Second, the bureaucracy around the provincial governor had added layers since 2005. This development was not necessarily negative; among other things, it meant that Afghans were taking more responsibility for governance. But it also meant that Canada had rivals for Afghan attention in Kandahar. A major source of competition was the UN and its various organizations. The UN special representative, Kai Eide, wanted to increase the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in

sub-national governance and had shifted resources to do so. (Incidentally, this was done with support from the ISAF commander, Gen McKiernan, and his successor, Gen McChrystal.) The UN was now represented on the provincial-level Steering Committee.[43]

A flood of new UN and UN-supported acronyms descended on Kandahar City to meet with Afghan leaders and the Canadian civilian staff at the PRT, but their activities appeared less relevant to Canadian operations as they evolved through 2009. The danger remained that there would be now three more international entities vying for influence in Kandahar: the Americans, the insurgency, and the UN.

As for the UN, Kai Eide believed that

> It required closer UN cooperation with the Afghan government and the international military forces, but a number of UN agencies saw such cooperation as a threat to the independence of the UN. It could blur the lines between civilian and military activities, make the UN staff more vulnerable, and harm its efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to areas where the Taliban was present. It could certainly have a negative impact on attempts to play a role in reconciliation, since the Taliban would see the UN as being too close to the enemy, the international military forces. These views were widely shared among the non-governmental organizations in Afghanistan.[44]

The prospect of having all of these international agencies acting as neutrals while in support of a government that was under attack by an externally-supported insurgency was truly mind-bending. So was the prospect of having TF Kandahar defend their efforts. That said, senior Canadian leaders generally retained unfettered access to the governor and district leaders.

Building on staff experience dating back to CTF Aegis in 2006, BGen Vance decided to create a liaison and coordination position at TF Kandahar headquarters. The Reconstruction and Development Officer was supposed to connect with the Development Advisor, the Political Advisor and their staffs at the headquarters, and then with the reconstruction and development personnel at the PRT so that everyone was on the same planning page.[45] Once the Vance headquarters deployed, however, the interface between TF Kandahar and the CIDA and DFAIT teams became extremely problematic. The Plans staff responsible for coordinating military support to their operations "had a lot of drive. A lot of us who were there had this desire to want to make up for what we couldn't do in 2006." However, as Capt Darcy Heddon noted, "as the boots hit the ground, CIDA and DFAIT looked at me and were like, 'Who the fuck are you?'" The atmosphere was exceptionally unprofessional:

> To tell you the truth, it seemed that [DFAIT and CIDA] just ran around like chickens with their heads cut off … so many times it just seemed they didn't know which way to turn. And it's not the CIDA operators on the ground. I'd get frustrated with the people themselves, but I came to understand they were receiving orders from Kabul, and they're receiving orders from Ottawa … I found that they were threatened by the fact that my [title] said "Reconstruction and Development". That to them was like, "You wear a uniform. That cannot be in your [title]." So right away, I was shunned because I was a threat to what *they* should be doing. They said, "Your focus is on killing people." And, funnily enough, I've never killed anyone in my life. I can think of a few people I'd *like* to …[46]

In time, the DFAIT and CIDA staff at the PRT accused their counterparts at TF Kandahar HQ of being "military sympathizers" because they tried to move governance and development forward. The issue, according to Capt Heddon, was "limelight":

> I really think that they wanted to be able to say "We were in Afghanistan and we fixed the problem." We [TF Kandahar] couldn't fix the problem, let alone them with the bureaucracy that they have. We were trying to create an immediate effect, really, because people were dying, and people were dying way too much.[47]

The Origins and Demise of Operation Plan GRIZZLY

BGen Vance learned in mid-2008 that he would command TF Kandahar in 2009. Like his predecessors, Vance took every opportunity to assess the situation in Kandahar as it unfolded throughout 2008 and conceptualize how he and his headquarters staff would approach the problem during training and while deployed. He understood that previous plans and ideas were not all necessarily outdated; they had been under-resourced, and Vance would have more resources than had been available to previous rotations.[48]

Several factors influenced Vance's thinking in the summer of 2008. The first was the break-out at Sarposa Prison, which demonstrated that Kandahar City was not secure. The lessons of Fallujah in Iraq were also clear: sending conventional forces to fight insurgents in the city proper was not an option. Realizing that a substantial proportion of the province's population was in Kandahar City and the districts closest to it, Vance thought, instead of trying to secure districts, why not secure people? From his experience in the Balkans, Vance recalled the UN Protected Area concept used in Bosnia: a UN force patrolling and enforcing a protective zone outside a designated population centre. The Protected Areas in Bosnia failed because the UN lacked the political will to defend them effectively, but the idea of protecting the population was sound, even on the larger scale of Kandahar Province.

Vance dubbed his protected areas "Stabilization Zones." Creating and then announcing a Stabilization Zone could have a significant psychological impact on the wider population. This was the crucial aspect of Vance's concept as it evolved.[49]

Vance refined this concept to include a Disrupt Zone outside his Stabilization Zone, and envisioned a brigade for each zone. The Stabilization Zone forces would include police, the PRT infantry company, another Canadian infantry company, units of the Afghan National Army, and special operations forces. The Disrupt Zone forces would comprise the Canadian battle group, allied battle groups, and special operations forces. The Disrupt Zone forces would live in the field without tactical infrastructure and conduct 30-day operations.[50]

As the situation progressed in Afghanistan, BGen Vance realized that he and his staff might have to drill down to a lower level:

> Our Canadian whole of government effort … really wasn't getting down and really changing the lives of substantial swaths of the population. They were left without demonstrable, tangible proof of what ISAF was about … no Afghan community felt the sum of the parts. … Every commander before me had done similar things but they just didn't have those factors in play, more force available particularly.[51]

These and other ideas gestated as the Vance headquarters of TF Kandahar stood up in September 2008. Knowing what he wanted to do, Vance requested a mission analysis from his J5, LCol Lee Hammond. How did his concepts fit into existing plans? The campaign plan developed at Canadian Expeditionary Force Command (CEFCOM) was deemed incomprehensible and too complex. Crucially, "our [whole-of-government] partners ignored it completely — only the Memorand[a] to Cabinet and the Six Government Principles guided their work." And more importantly, the CEFCOM plan "did not lay out steps to win." The Shape-Clear-Hold-Build concept adopted for Operation TOLO by Regional Command (South) under MGen Marc Lessard was deemed important, and retained. The Dutch-led headquarters staff that replaced Lessard's team at Regional Command (South) in November 2008 "had nothing to offer … there was no real ISAF campaign plan."[52]

Vance and his headquarters staff understood the Kandahar Action Plan as the first real attempt at a whole-of-government plan and a deliberate effort to get all the OGDs to "follow a similar path", but they had no confidence in it: "KAP was not a plan: it was a framework to create district-level plans." There was no agreement on common terminology between the departments, and the document was rife with huge compromises that undermined its intent. Furthermore, with the American influx under way, the KAP was rapidly becoming irrelevant — indeed staff at TF Kandahar headquarters circulated a cartoon that depicted a book labeled "KAP" being subsumed beneath Hokusai's famous *Great Wave off Kanagawa*.[53]

Photo Credit: Author

The enemy focused more and more on the once-placid district of Dand in their effort to influence the population in nearby Kandahar City. From this northeast facing aerial photograph one can see the slow progression from Dand to District 6 of Kandahar City. Note the chimneys for the brick kilns, a Dand economic staple.

Looking at the Stability Boxes in Panjwayi and Zharey, the incoming headquarters concluded that "it was the right idea, in the wrong place, and simplistically applied. The initial box was perfectly square and had no relationship with tribal boundaries, economic realities, etc."[54]

To complicate matters further, CEFCOM commander LGen Michael Gauthier deposited 32 pages of detailed guidance onto the planners' desks in early January 2009. There was no more campaign planning coming from CEFCOM, only 'direction' and 'guidance'. Along with other materials, CEFCOM's package was the product of intense discussions held in November 2008 on the future of Operation ATHENA and what it might or could possibly achieve by 2011.

In November 2008, the Chief of the Defence Staff directed Canadian forces in Kandahar to:

1. support Whole-of-Government and meet Canadian Forces objectives;

2. support Afghan National Security Force capacity-building through partnered operations as the only viable exit strategy;

3. maintain key ISAF leadership role until late 2009 at least; and

4. accept that, after late 2009, there would be a transition phase until Canadian forces withdrew in 2011.

CEFCOM identified that there were several factors working at cross purposes that had to be reconciled.[55] They were:

1. The demand by the government for measurable effects in a short time between 2009 and 2011.

2. The fact that the tools for measuring and reporting these effects were not agreed to by all involved Canadian government entities, despite the 2008 Cabinet benchmarking project;

3. The demand to publicly report any progress derived from this process;

4. Ottawa's demand to expand the role of Whole-of-Government in Kandahar and for this to *be seen* to have taken place;

5. The American forces were going to deploy in substantial numbers which would reduce Canadian influence and saliency;

6. The Canadian signature projects were not going to be completed before 2011.

CEFCOM directed that Canadian efforts should focus on Kandahar City and its key approaches, and freedom of movement on main lines of communication. If possible, objectives should be tied to human geography. The Kandahar Action Plan would remain in effect until March 2009.[56] Summed up, TF Kandahar HQ should deliver security, enable governance, and enable reconstruction and development.

According to CEFCOM, the Canadian Army's main effort was to conduct security operations. The draft guidance noted: "Notwithstanding the Government of Canada policy priorities, a secure environment is the *sine qua non* for the delivery of positive Governance and R&D effects. These operations will take place in … key districts and be focused …" After American forces flowed in, building capacity in the Afghan national security forces, especially the Afghan National Army, would become the main Canadian effort. At some point in the future, "as the campaign matures … civilian-led efforts will likely become the main effort" in "enabling whole-of-government outcomes." In effect, CEFCOM subtly ranked its agenda for TF Kandahar, and the priority was "deliver security" before "enabling governance" or "reconstruction and development".[57]

As CEFCOM envisioned things, success by 2011 would look like this: "[T]he majority of the provincial population in our three focus areas have security provided by ANSF, mentored and partnered with the CF," with a functional Joint District Coordination Centre and police mentored by CIVPOL in those districts. There would be a Kandahar City security plan, fully resourced and tested. Afghan National Army units should be at Capability Milestone 1, while Canadian forces would have handed over to American forces stabilized districts. Ideally, the national and provincial elections would have taken place without insurgent interruptions, and all the Canadian priority and signature projects would have been completed.[58]

TF Kandahar planners noted that a defeated insurgency did not seem to figure in this guidance and planning. As for incorporating development into the planning, the PRT refused to provide the incoming TF Kandahar planners with basic information on the locations of completed and ongoing projects and the locations of schools. BGen Vance's planners wondered whether the PRT even possessed this information. Notably, CIDA and DFAIT personnel at TF Kandahar were consulted as GRIZZLY took shape.[59]

The premise underlying Plan GRIZZLY was that 75 percent to 85 percent of the provincial population lived in Kandahar City and its surrounding districts. The idea was to identify communities that could influence the main routes into the city or key adjacent terrain and turn them into "Stability Towns", as opposed to laying a large Stability Box over a particular area. The Shape-Clear-Hold-Build-Enable process would be applied to each identified community, one at a time, with maximum acceptance and cooperation from the Afghans — especially the ANA, the Afghan National Police and the National Directorate of Security. The whole range of PRT capabilities would then follow. The local Community Development Council would be reinvigorated and linked, not only to the district leader and district government, but also to the Afghan provincial government reconstruction ministries where it could reconnect with the National Solidarity Program. It was crucial that each community be tied to the government and derive benefit from that connection. Each community would be offered an opportunity to establish its own police force, with appropriate training, to replace the Afghan Uniformed Police. This concept was dubbed the "Key Village Approach" or KVA. GRIZZLY was programmed to mount such an operation every 60 days until all 36 KVA communities were "enabled".

The flip side of the KVA was the Key Village Insurgency, or KVI. The mass influx of assistance of all types would tip the hands of those sitting on the fence who would, in theory, pass on who the local insurgents were.These opponents could be either co-opted or taken out by police or the National Directorate of Security, as the situation demanded. Non-local insurgents would flee and be susceptible to other coalition methodology. The incoming Americans would find KVA and KVI consistent with their concepts of operations, so Plan GRIZZLY could be implemented by both Canadian and American units working alongside Afghan forces.[60]

Plan GRIZZLY drew on three years of Canadian experience in the Kandahar operating environment. It recognized the centrality of Kandahar City. It looked back and it looked forward, noting past deficiencies and acknowledging that force levels would change in 2009. It incorporated Afghan organizations at every step of the way, and even the governor supported it. But by 9 March 2009, Plan GRIZZLY was dead in the water. Why?

Both CEFCOM and the Vance headquarters recognized that the Kandahar Action Plan would be overtaken by events, but other organizations did not. Where the Thompson headquarters had used the Kandahar Action Plan to include CIDA and DFAIT working along its three lines of operations, others saw the Kandahar Action Plan as the only plan, and one carved in stone. When GRIZZLY was briefed back in Ottawa, the military leadership signed off on it. When LGen Gauthier briefed GRIZZLY to the Privy Council and Cabinet-level committees, however, David Mulroney and others got upset.

They saw GRIZZLY as a change in strategy foisted on them by "the military," a replacement for the Kandahar Action Plan that the civilian departments had not been consulted on and did not accept. Viewing GRIZZLY as a tactical plan supported with PRT resources, Vance and his headquarters were surprised that it had been briefed at Cabinet level at all. Mulroney insisted that Canadian strategy was to adhere to the six priority programs and signature projects and nothing more. Vance argued that GRIZZLY could fit easily under the umbrella of the Kandahar Action Plan, but to no avail.[61]

The impasse continued throughout March. On 18 March, BGen Vance instructed his staff to reformulate GRIZZLY and remove all references to whole-of-government programs and departments from the plan. In keeping with the October 2008 Regional Command (South) Plan TOLO, the revised plan would be called KANTOLO and placed under the NATO umbrella, not the Canadian one.[62]

As Vance noted in retrospect:

> It is very, very clear to me that the major factor of not having enough forces available prevented us from doing counterinsurgency properly. But there was another factor and it was a factor that I ran into and basically exploded on us as we were in theatre and that is that it wasn't perfectly clear at the highest levels of CIDA, DFAIT and the Afghanistan Task Force that we were there in a counterinsurgency effort as an alliance partner to achieve the first-order effects … [we were there] to produce counterinsurgency effects in Kandahar. Counterinsurgency effects take more than one partner to deliver. And it was not uniformly agreed upon at the highest level and in fact there were some ideological differences between the departments as to what their purpose was and therefore what techniques would be used to support that purpose in Kandahar.[63]

Capt Darcy Heddon said the same thing a different way:

> I don't think the Canadian government actually really gave a shit about whether or not the issue in Afghanistan was fixed. Because if they did, they wouldn't have put a timeline on something that takes 20 years to do [when they established the benchmarks and priorities]. And all they cared about was being able to see — and we saw this throughout the tour — all they cared about was whether or not they could report back to Ottawa that they had made a little bit of progress. The appearance of progress was important to them. I truly believe that those operators on the ground really did care and wanted to make progress. And they were frustrated too.[64]

KANTOLO would have to wait. Vance and his planners would try again.

TF Kandahar Shaping Operations

Meanwhile, LCol Mike Patrick and his J3 staff formulated and implemented a series of shaping operations which in effect became a campaign plan to support the implementation of KANTOLO. The Operations staff defined and prioritized three approaches to Kandahar City. The first was from the Horn of Panjwayi through Nakhonay, into Dand District and then into the city. The second was the "Heart of Darkness" in Zharey District, through Asheque and Senjaray into the western suburbs of the city. The third was the northern approach from Ghorak to Shah Wali Kot and Khakrez, into Arghandab District, and then into the city. Canadian and Afghan forces held part of Panjwayi and part of Zharey (see Figure 5-2), but lacked the resources to handle all three at once, as previous rotations had demonstrated.[65]

The decision was made to clear eastern Panjwayi to take the pressure off Dand while KANTOLO went to work there. Zharey was just too ecologically diverse to occupy, so that district would be subjected to a series of disrupt operations to secure Highway 1 as much as possible. The planners wanted to execute a block as far north as possible in Arghandab to shut down the Ghorak–Arghandab ratline, but it was not clear that sufficient forces would be available. Consequently, the shaping and disruption operations came to focus on the Horn of Panjwayi and Zharey District. Once KANTOLO went into effect and started to push insurgents out of Dand, they would move to Arghandab and western Panjwayi, where they would be cleared and pushed into western Panjwayi and the Zharey "Heart of Darkness," where they could be continually disrupted.[66]

To achieve all these objectives, the TF Kandahar planners had to gain bureaucratic concurrence and extract resources from Regional Command (South). This was no easy task. Regional Command (South) wanted a say in any operation larger than platoon level, and there were certain rules of engagement restrictions that they could impose. To push back against restrictive bureaucracy, LCol Patrick and the planners created "extant operations", ongoing disruption operations with forces assigned temporarily or opportunistically, that could react faster than the approval bureaucracy at Regional Command (South) could. As a result, under Operation SHREDDER, forces in Zharey could probe and disrupt actively south of Highway 1 without having to formulate repeated named operations, each requiring specific approval before it could be mounted.[67]

For a time, TF Kandahar managed to pry loose more helicopters "so that Canadian, American and British forces could launch airmobile operations into western Zharey." The same went for ISTAR resources whose employment was influenced by Regional Command (South).[68]

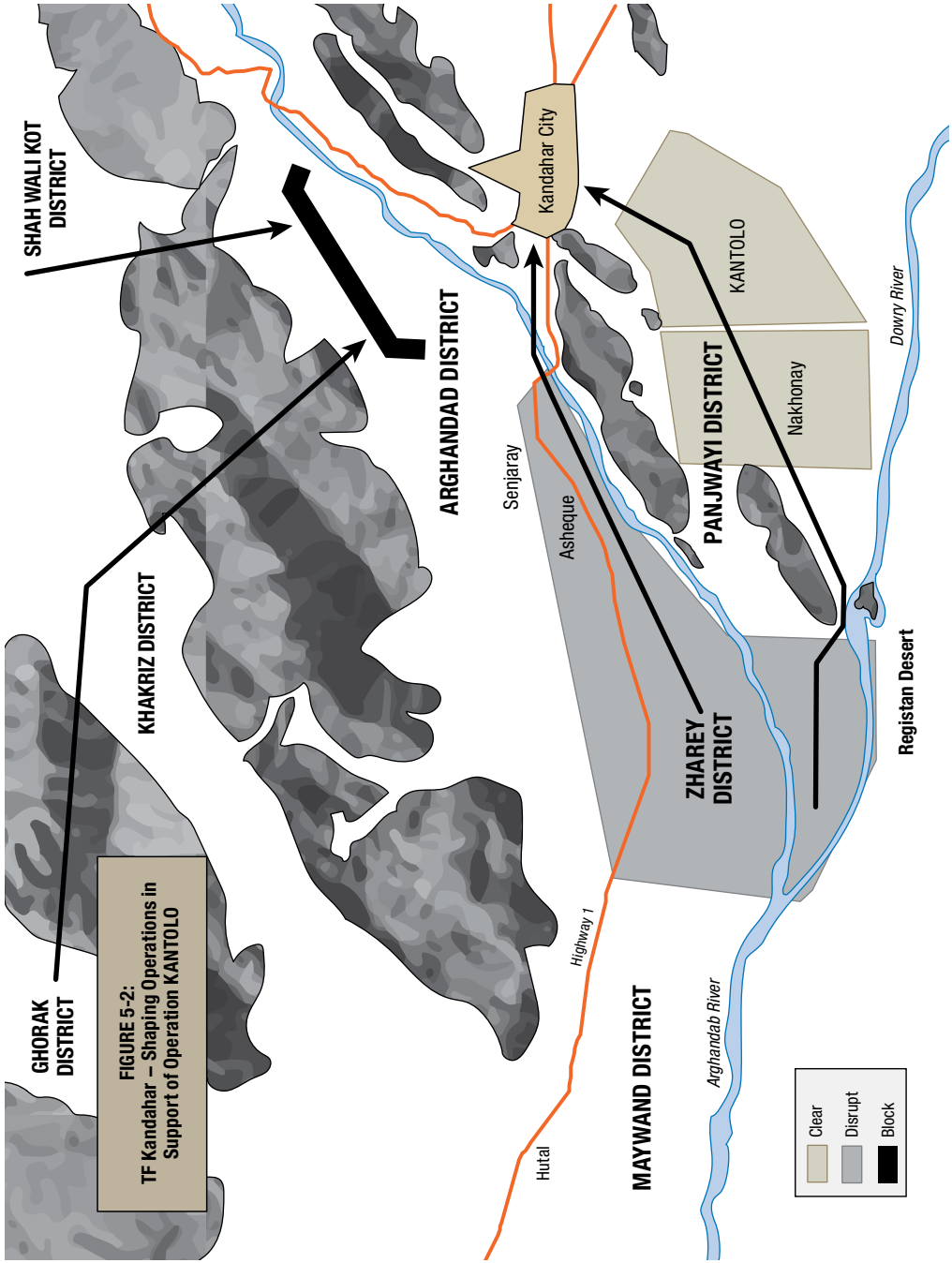

FIGURE 5-2:
TF Kandahar – Shaping Operations in Support of Operation KANTOLO

Figure 5-2: TF Kandahar – Shaping Operations in Support of Operation KANTOLO

The Character of the Insurgency in Early 2009

The main issues confronting the Quetta Shura and the other insurgent shuras based in Pakistan revolved around the Afghan national elections and what to do if or when the American influx arrived. At this point in the war, the Taliban leadership in Pakistan believed that the war had reached stalemate and were putting out reconciliation feelers through Saudi Arabia. This development was not new; the Taliban and the Karzai government had been in contact several times since late 2007 or early 2008, but the Taliban's simplistic demand that foreign troops leave Afghanistan was not a realistic basis for discussion.[69] The variety of schools of thought on the Taliban position related to how much Inter-Services Intelligence in Pakistan controlled or influenced the Taliban, how much Al Qaeda influenced the Taliban, and, therefore, how much autonomy to negotiate the Taliban leadership really had.[70] One analysis baldly stated that:

> Powerful forces in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan would prefer indefinite warfare to any peace settlement, not least because of the vast sums of American money being spent on both sides of the Durand Line. In Afghanistan, these potential spoilers include local contractors (particularly security contractors), corrupt officials, and drug dealers, all of whom would find it more difficult to prosper in a peacetime environment. Pakistan would also lose considerable revenue from American assistance and NATO transit traffic were the war to end.[71]

Canadian analysts in Kandahar believed that the reconciliation feelers were stall tactics designed to give the insurgent leaders time to figure out the dimensions of the American influx and its larger implications. The Quetta Shura discussed whether to mount their own surge before the Americans arrived in 2009, or ride out the influx. Canadians also discovered that some insurgent groups in Helmand and Kandahar wanted to stop fighting but were frustrated by the under-funding and unreliability of the Afghan government's reconciliation program. In any event, some of these fighters and their leaders believed that Pakistan-based leaders would order them killed if they laid down their weapons and quit fighting. In an attempt to resolve these and other issues, the Quetta Shura conducted an unprecedented series of shuras in regions facing the Regional Command (South) area of responsibility, and not their counterparts to the north.[72]

In May, the Quetta Shura finally distributed its operations plan dubbed Operation NASRAT. In the run-up to the 2009 elections, insurgent units were to mount "high-profile" attacks targeting prominent Afghan political and security leaders, and Afghan companies that worked for ISAF and the Afghan security forces.[73] Later in the summer, the Quetta Shura issued more specific orders to disrupt the elections by intimidating the Independent Election Commission and its personnel by means of kidnappings and assassinations in Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul and Oruzgan.[74]

Photo Credit: DND IS2009-0158r

By 2009, the entities behind the Taliban determined that there was a need for increased plausible deniability. As a result, there was a shift away from factory-made anti-tank and anti-personnel mines and towards the use of homemade explosives and plastic jugs. These were virtually undetectable by Canadian systems and could catastrophically destroy any vehicle in the Canadian inventory if enough of them were used.

To sustain this kind of pressure, the insurgency had to secure and retain routes for supporting and facilitating terrorism in Kandahar City (see Figure 5-3).[75] This requirement increased the importance of the eastern Panjwayi-Dand-Malajat-District 6 route. Similarly, the insurgents wanted a better disposition in Arghandab District, closer to the city. This meant applying pressure in northern Arghandab, lower Shah Wali Kot, Zharey and western Panjwayi to keep the security forces occupied. Senjaray was a critical geographic node connecting the northern and central insurgent groups.

This program also involved consolidating control over the populations of Zharey and western Panjwayi. Consolidation took several forms. First, the insurgents mimicked the Canadian-Afghan approach to local projects by, in effect, fielding their own version of the Construction Management Organization. Second, Taliban judges arbitrated local grievances. Third, insurgents attempted to co-opt the Red Cross, Red Crescent and other non-governmental organizations to provide health care, collect intelligence, and provide cover for insurgent activities. Fourth, the insurgents once again exploited the government's poppy-eradication policies to gain support from farmers whose crops were selected for destruction by district leaders and police.[76] These efforts were always to be shielded by mass use of IEDs to hinder the movement of Canadian and Afghan forces, and harassing attacks on tactical infrastructure to distract them. The Quetta Shura and its allies now stepped back to see what would happen.

Maywand District Operations, February–March 2009

The 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment (2-2 Infantry) of the U.S. Army remained deployed in three locations in Maywand District: Forward Operating Base Ramrod, Forward Operating Base Hutal, and Combat Outpost Terminator. Also in Maywand, a Canadian-mentored Afghan company held Strong Point Pegasus on Highway 1. 2-2 Infantry was supported by: G Troop, a Canadian M-777 gun detachment led by Lt Mike Laverty; UAV coverage downlinked from SUAVs and other ISTAR resources; a tactical psychological operations detachment (on occasion); and a CIMIC team from the Provincial Reconstruction Team. The Canadians at FOB Hutal worked closely with C Company led by Capt Trevor Voelkel, who troops protected Construction Management Team-1 in Zharey. Coordinating 2-2 Infantry, the American Police Mentoring Team and CIMIC activity in Maywand could be problematic, but 'BBQ' diplomacy did much to improve relations.[77]

Enemy activity tended to focus in and around FOB Ramrod in the west and on COP Terminator on the Maywand-Zharey boundary. The pattern of activity remained constant: insurgent IED emplacers were spotted by ScanEagle SUAV, the outpost fired 120mm mortars (or the FOB fired 155mm artillery) at the emplacers, and sent out a patrol

FIGURE 5-3:
Enemy Dispositions and Activity,
Early to Mid-2009

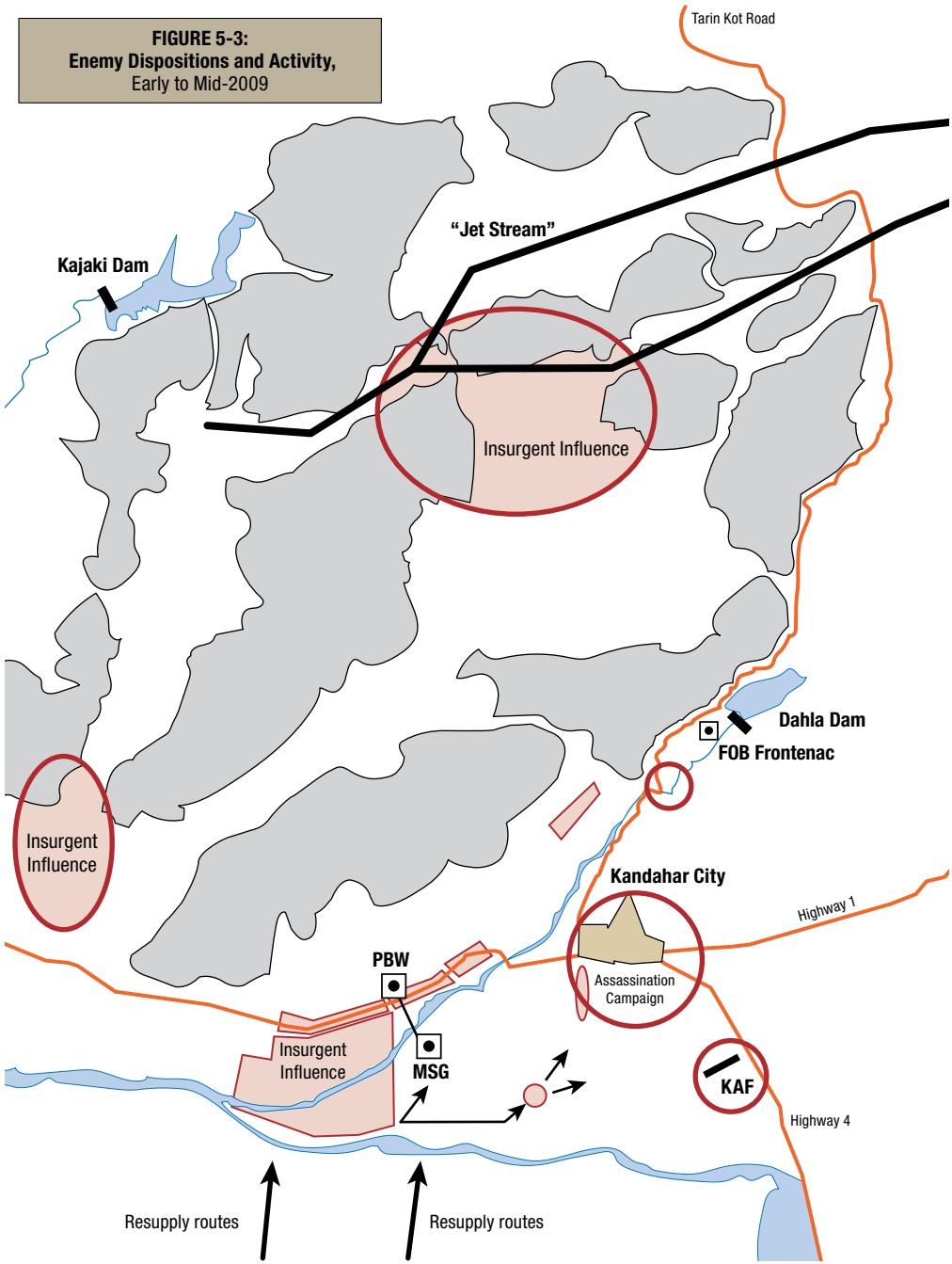

Figure 5-3: Enemy Dispositions and Activity, Early to Mid-2009

to conduct battle damage assessment. Occasionally, small arms fire would be directed at the outposts, but nothing on the scale seen over in Zharey. On one occasion a Canadian Heron UAV was used to vector in a B-1B bomber and a pair of F-18s against six insurgents engaged in emplacement.[78]

For the most part, however, the enemy wanted the coalition forces to leave Maywand alone. During presence patrols in Band-e Timor, 2-2 Infantry found two insurgent aid stations or hospitals, indicating the area was used as a support node. When the Maywand insurgent networks wanted to distract 2-2 Infantry and the Afghan security forces, they instigated demonstrations in Hutal bazaar using civilian casualties as their primary grievance. The only other serious violence involved the back-to-back ambush of USPI convoys on Highway 1 but it was unclear whether this was insurgent or commercially-motivated violence.[79]

The Focused District Development process was deemed successful, and a top-notch National Directorate of Security commander was now assigned to Maywand District. Local people noted an improvement in the police, but district governance remained a problem. District Leader Haji Massoud, who was at odds with the new police force, was called out for his attempts to bribe the Canadian CIMIC team with project money, and people complained that he took a piece of the action. On the other hand, the district leader gave out a consistent anti-Taliban message in all venues, including radio and television broadcasts.[80]

The Americans were not shy about religious engagement; using their Civil Affairs chain, they distributed mosque refurbishment kits in outlying communities as they patrolled with the Afghan National Army.[81] In time a USAID representative deployed out to Maywand and worked to bring American aid money and programmes to bear. Working with the CIMIC team, attempts were made to ascertain how functional the District Development Assembly and Community Development Council system was. The DDA was not working, mostly due to interference from the district leader's insistence that he receive his due. It would take time to reinvigorate this structure. Debbie McCosham, a Canadian White Situational Awareness specialist, also arrived to build up knowledge on Maywand and support the effort in parallel with the American Human Terrain Team.[82]

In terms of operations, 2-2 Infantry mounted a snap airmobile operation into Mandowzai village in March but little turned up. Another ground operation flushed out some enemy leadership who were subsequently dispatched with a SOF strike. 2-2 Infantry's companies then uncovered a small anti-Taliban militia in one area who claimed they were armed "by the President's brother" back in 2004 and told to maintain security. In another village, locals had seized a Taliban team and were threatening to execute them until Afghan security forces intervened. Local information in other areas led to the apprehension of a Taliban financier and a facilitator. Finally, an Afghan source in Maywand passed on that

Mullah Azim, the Taliban leader responsible for the mass murder of 29 bus passengers back in October 2008, was found murdered in Quetta. It looked like the enemy was on the run in Maywand but it would take time to consolidate these successes.[83]

Zharey District Operations, February–March 2009

Zharey District remained the preserve of N Company under Maj Rob McBride, 1st Kandak and its mentors, and, when possible, a police detachment and their P-OMLT mentors. Enemy activity in February remained light: three USPI convoys were shot up on Highway 1 (and again, it was not clear whether this was insurgent violence or commercial violence) as were strong points Spin Pir, Lakokhel, and the Pashmul South police station. The enemy cells in eastern Zharey complained that they were low on IED components and there was only one strike against a Canadian vehicle that month.[84]

In order to generate space for voter registration efforts in both Panjwayi and Zharey, TF Kandahar assembled forces for Operation SHAHI TANDAR 3 (see Figure 5-4 and Figure 5-4a). Once again, the main target area was Nahlgam and vicinity. L Company from Regional Battle Group (South) was available, and an air-assault force was formed with CH-47 helicopters and escorts from the Regional Command (South) pool. Company A from 2-2 Infantry was tasked to block west of the target area. N Company was the dismounted element, sweeping into the main target area, while M Company conducted a feint west of Sperwan Ghar into Talukan and Zangabad to shape insurgent thinking and draw off or expose enemy forces to the south.[85]

M Company deployed and moved onto its objectives on 31 January with no contact and no finds except a "scarecrow" equipped with a dummy weapon that drew a few shots from the snipers before they realized what it was. N Company found several ammunition caches including a sniper rifle, police uniforms, ten pressure-plate IEDs, and a Canadian DAGR (Defense Advanced Global Positioning System Receiver) system. A car-bomb factory was also found and exploited. Chinooks arrived to extricate L Company while N Company joined the Zulu LAV IIIs. While N Company moved back down Route Edmonton, an engineer LAV hit an IED that wounded six Canadians and killed Sapper Sean Greenfield of 2 Combat Engineer Regiment.[86]

After Operation SHAHI TANDAR 3, Maj McBride and N Company conducted two company-sized patrols in early February along the first and second wadi lines south of the area between Spin Pir and Howz-e Madad, and then another west of Pashmul. These patrols produced no contact with the enemy. At the end of February, N Company surged into Senjeray, where they uncovered an insurgent madrassa loaded with weapons and cellphones.[87]

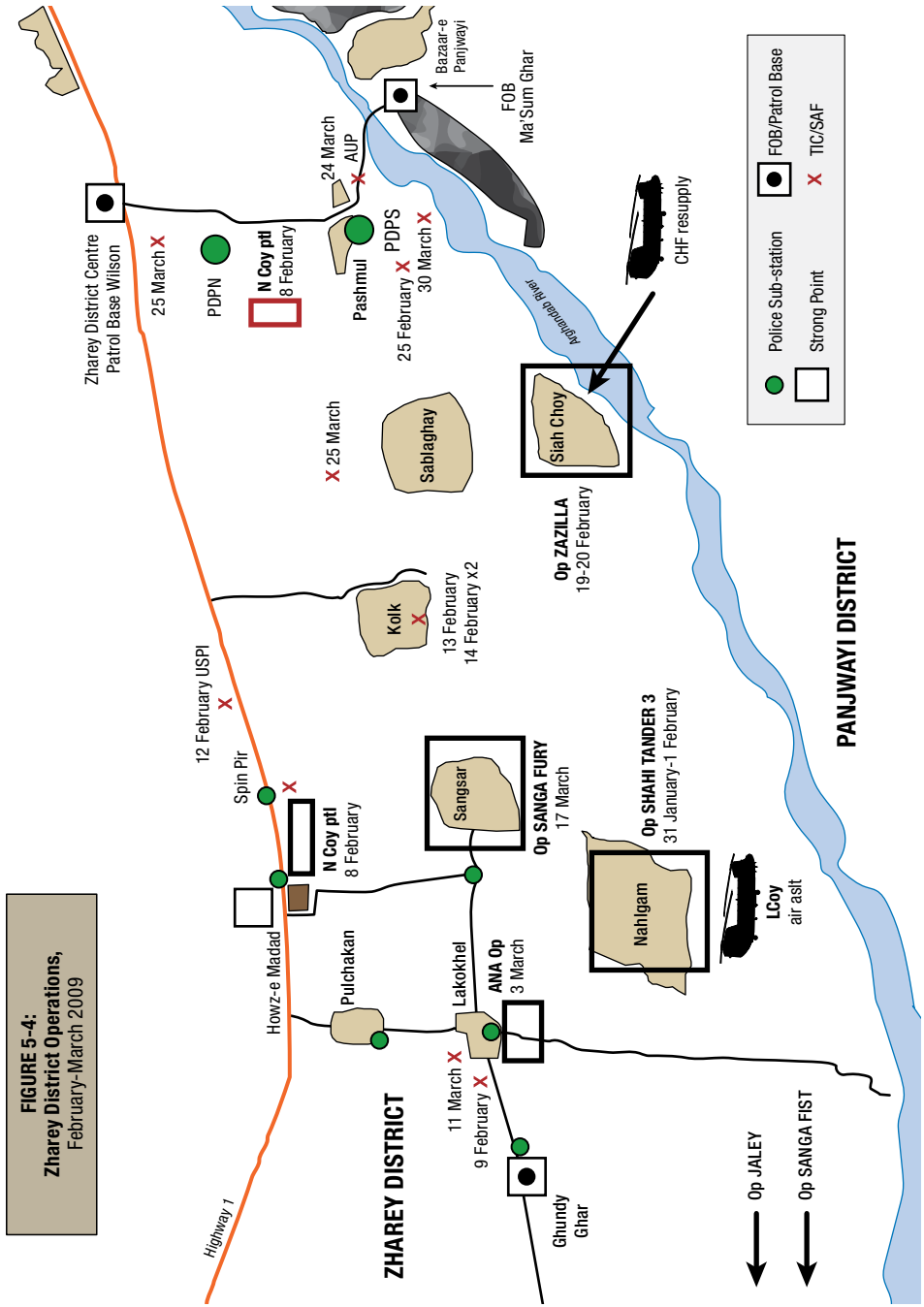

Figure 5-4: Zharey District Operations, February-March 2009

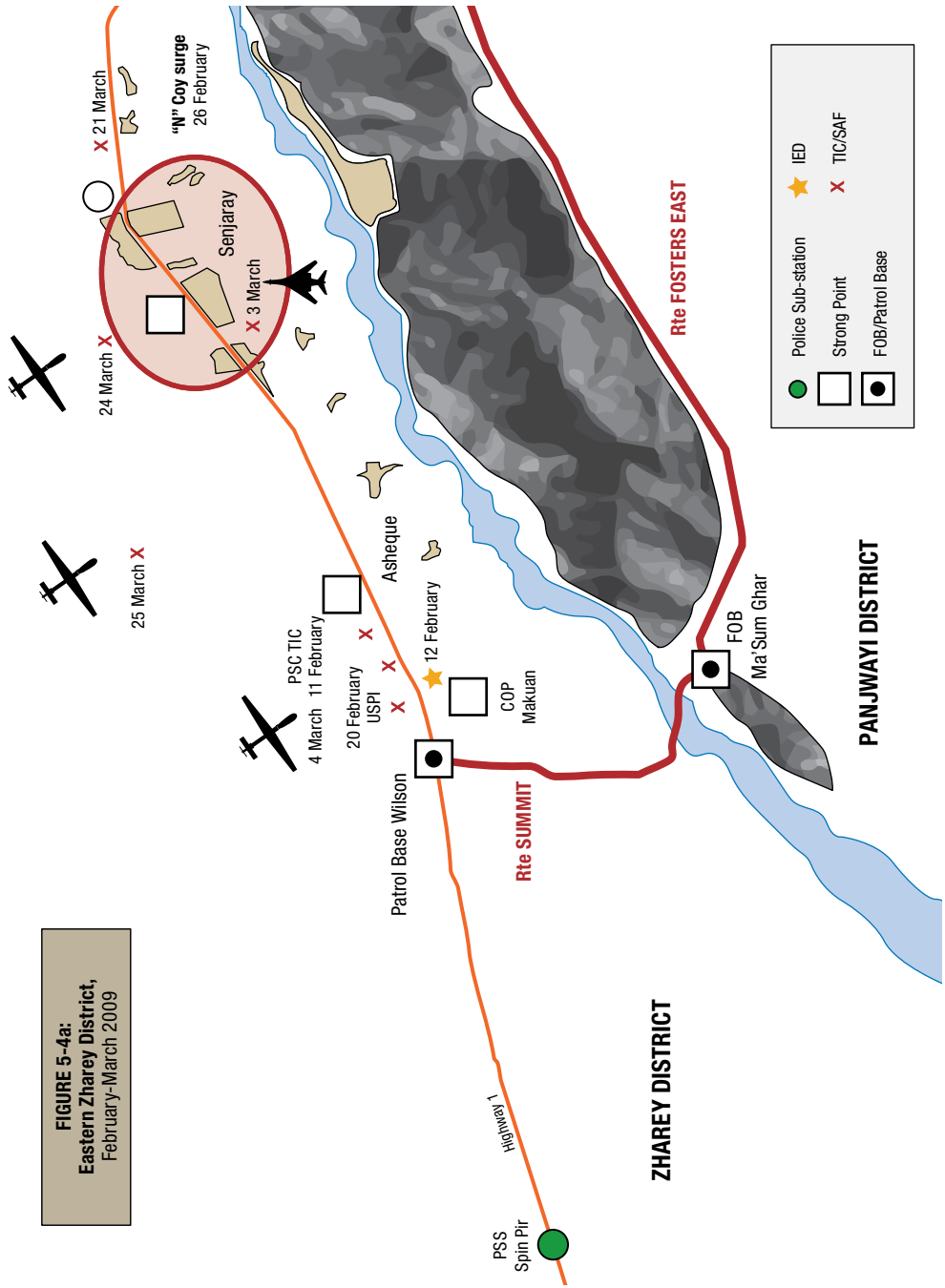

FIGURE 5-4a:
Eastern Zharey District,
February-March 2009

Figure 5-4a: Eastern Zharey District, February-March 2009

Meanwhile, 1st Kandak was preparing for assessment by the validation team. Without going through their mentors, Kandak 1 was able to secure Zharey police support on their own, an event which came as a pleasant surprise. After being launched on a disrupt patrol near Kolk supported by a platoon of N Company LAV IIIs, the weather turned foul and a sandstorm was imminent. The enemy tried to capitalize on this turn in events, knowing full well air cover would be impossible. 1st Kandak and the Canadian LAV III platoon shot their way out of an ambush and withdrew in good order as M-777 artillery dropped smoke to screen them.[88]

When the weather cleared the next day, the Afghans and Canadians returned to the area and were caught up in three separate contacts, including an intense attack on the LAV IIIs. This time, however, the battle group had an armed MQ-9 Reaper on station; it killed six insurgents, one of them later identified as Mullah Salaam of Band-e Timor, an enemy commander from Maywand District.[89]

On 19 February, N Company and 1st Kandak launched Operation ZILLILA into Sia Choy to keep the insurgents off balance. Resupply flights by Canadian CH-47 Chinook helicopters gave TF Silver Dart some much-needed experience but operations on the first day produced no insurgent reaction.[90] On day two, however, the forces were engaged on two occasions, both of which were suppressed with two F-15s in one case and twenty two 155mm rounds in the other.[91]

On the development and governance side, the situation in Zharey was not radically different from what it had been over the past six months. District Leader Niaz Mohammad Sahardi continued to attend all the right meetings, as did CIMIC operators and representatives of the PRT, but it was not clear exactly what was being accomplished. Afghans with claims were told that the PRT was waiting for Canadian ministerial approval and that "they must be patient." Down to only two serviceable vehicles, Construction Management Team-1 was unable to conduct operations.[92]

District Chief of Police Bismillah Khan was at odds with the ethnic Hazara officers under his command: they had not been paid in months and threatened to quit. Local people told CIMIC operators that they thought the police were effective but overenthusiastic during their searches, while the P-OMLT noted that "burning every ounce of marihuana, hash and poppy in Pashmul will only alienate [the police] from the simple farmers whose livelihoods they are destroying, not the drug traffickers which pay for their crops."[93]

The enemy, however, had taken a leaf from the Canadian playbook. Using taxes levied from the communities south of the wadi lines, and employing confiscated or rented construction equipment, Taliban cells started building a road and a madrassa in the area south of Howz-e Madad and Sangsar, and urged the locals to help lay gravel on two other roads.[94]

In effect, the Taliban now had their own version of the Construction Management Organization and, with the taxation and school, were well on their way to establishing competitive governance in part of Zharey District.

The initial response to these developments was minimal. 1st Kandak launched a company-sized patrol south of Lakokhel with N Company screening to the west. After a brief skirmish, they withdrew under an M-777 smokescreen. Other operations were continuing.

LTC Dan Hurlbut and LCol Roger Barrett had discussed the possibility of a joint operation by 2-2 Infantry and the 3 RCR Battle Group in western Zharey. The intent was to disrupt the insurgent linkages between Maywand and Zharey while at the same time gathering information for future operations that might go into the area once the American influx came in. The enemy's leadership was somewhat discombobulated and it was possible that if they were forced to move, they could be targeted by other assets. These ideas gelled into three separate but related operations once the Vance headquarters was on the ground and operating. The larger intent was to generate disruption (that is, in the enemy's camp) in preparation for the upcoming Canadian task force relief in place. The phased operations included Operation SANGA FIST, a Canadian airmobile probe into Nar Karez southwest of Ghundy Ghar; Operation SANGA FURY, an Afghan feint between Sangsar and Howz-e Madad; and Operation JALEY ('Net') which would bring both battle groups to blanket the area once the enemy had settled in.[95]

In Operation SANGA FIST, N Company 3 RCR, augmented with coalition forces, launched into southwestern Zharey against a possible command-and-control node. They were inserted on 7 March by three CH-47 Chinooks, one Canadian and two British, escorted by four CH-146 Griffons. The operation confirmed that insurgents had used the compounds there for a variety of activities, but any leaders who may have been present left before the coalition force arrived. Very little was found. The insurgents tried to reinforce with fighters from the Lakokhel area, but coalition communications jamming deterred further action.[96] Operation SANGA FIST was the first airmobile operation in Afghanistan involving both Canadian troops and Canadian helicopters.[97]

Operations SANGA FURY and JALEY overlapped. On 17 March, while Canadian CH-47s prepared to move M Company and Recce Platoon to Strong Point Mushan, 1st Kandak and their OMLT mentors launched into a sweep south of Howz-e Madad with support from N Company. On their way south, shoot-and-scoot teams engaged them five times; SUAVs tried to gain positive identification for an orbiting MQ-9 Reaper, but with limited results. Compound searches produced nothing, and the sweep returned to the strong point. N Company moved on to Strong Point Lakokhel in preparation for Operation JALEY.[98]

Operation JALEY, 18–20 March 2009

Operation JALEY turned into one of the largest coalition airmobile operations undertaken to this point. In addition to the Canadian CH-47 lift to Mushan, the operation brought the 4th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment under LTC James Benson with their CH-47 Chinooks and AH-64 Apaches to lift 2-2 Infantry while their OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters worked with the CH-146 Griffons in the armed reconnaissance role. Australian Chinooks also participated. The plan was to blanket western Zharey with simultaneous air and ground assaults using the bulk of 2-2 Infantry and 3 RCR. An ancillary part of the operation was a cordon-and-search of several communities in Arghandab District conducted by Recce Squadron and Afghan police accompanied by American police mentors (see Figure 5-5).[99]

Early in the morning of 18 March, the Leopard tanks of A Squadron linked up with N Company near Lakokhel, and part of Recce Squadron situated its Coyotes on Ghundy Ghar. Recce Platoon 3 RCR crossed the Arghandab River from the south to secure the crossing point for M Company. With stacked UAVs screening to the east, N Company, tanks, and police accompanied by P-OMLT mentors established a west-to-east block to the north of six objective areas. M Company advanced to clear the compounds of each objective area. There was no opposition.

After a delay due to deteriorating weather, LTC Benson launched the air assault at first light. The American and Australian Chinooks swooped in to COP Terminator and FOB Ramrod and progressively moved all four of 2-2 Infantry's companies to landing zones west of Ghundy Ghar. Spreading out like oil on water, the companies flooded the communities with detailed cordon-and-search operations partnered with police and supported by a Canadian PSYOPS team. The Human Terrain Team (with a Canadian augmentee) built a detailed picture of the communities as the searches progressed. Again, there was no opposition.

The insurgents in the 3 RCR and 2-2 Infantry objective areas were caught by surprise and either went to ground or tried to flee the area. These fighting-age males could not be engaged because they were unarmed and wearing civilian clothing. Loading themselves up in trucks, they behaved like migrant workers and skirted areas where coalition forces were operating. UAVs, Griffons and OH-58D Kiowa Warriors tracked as many as possible but were unable to engage. There was a significant amount of enemy communication, but it was clear to TF Kandahar that the insurgents were completely disrupted by the sheer size and geographical dispersion of the operation.

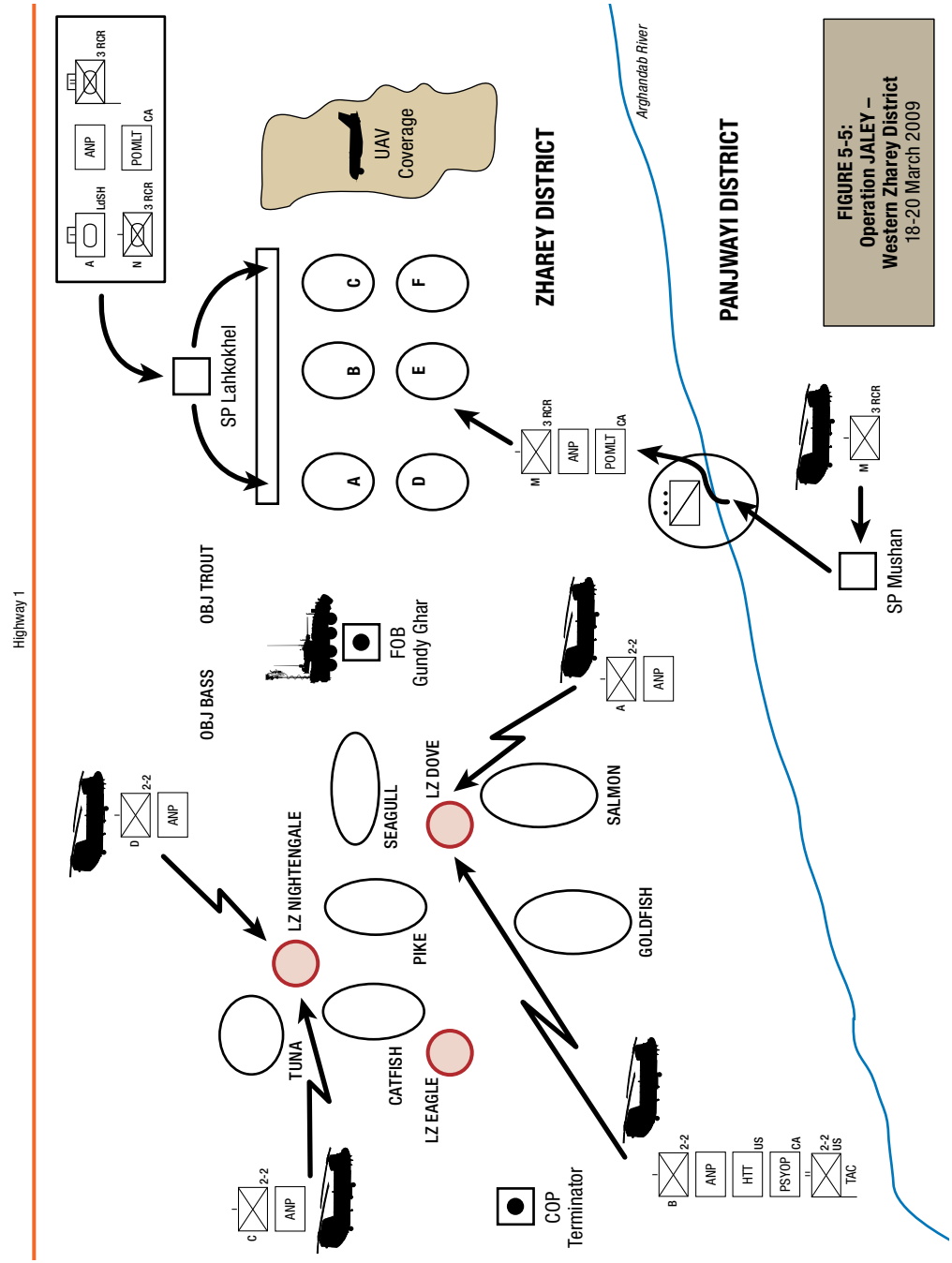

Figure 5-5: Operation JALEY – Western Zharey District, 18-20 March 2009

Photo Credit: Author

Photo Credit: Author

Operation JALEY was an ambitious Canadian-American-Afghan operation that saturated western Zharey District with a battalion-sized air assault and a battle group ground assault. It was cut short when the UN demanded that ISAF respect the so-called "Days of Tranquility." Four Canadians were killed and nine more were wounded during the unscheduled withdrawal.

By the second day, 3 RCR and 2-2 Infantry troops uncovered many small, dispersed caches, some containing factory-made Iranian IED components as well as medical supplies and the odd mortar tube. Two IED-makers were apprehended. Then N Company found a factory where insurgents were making IEDs out of Canadian 155-mm illumination carrier rounds. The Human Terrain Team determined from its interaction with the population that those which were from the area were classic fence-sitters who would side with whoever was on the ascendency in their community; lacking a permanent government presence, they would tacitly support the insurgents if they were in town. The Human Terrain Team also observed that the insurgents used boys as their eyes and ears in these communities, and that many elders were afraid of these clearly indoctrinated children. Further east, many people were tenant farmers without any ties beyond their landlord, and Afghan landowners could as easily be living in Germany as in Kandahar City. This rootlessness posed problems for any counterinsurgency efforts, as people who were not permanent residents of Zharey District had no bond to the district leader, the District Development Assembly, or any other governance mechanism.[100]

Operation JALEY ended two days ahead of schedule. The Canadian Development Advisor at TF Kandahar HQ disagreed with its timing and asked that it be shut down because it conflicted with the Days of Tranquility, a truce advocated by the UN and associated organizations so that polio eradication could take place. When BGen Vance resisted this overture on the grounds that the disruptive effect of JALEY in preparation for the relief in place was more important, Regional Command (South) insisted that the Days of Tranquility be respected. On 20 March, BGen Vance halted JALEY and ordered a withdrawal.[101]

As N Company pulled back to be airlifted out, an IED killed three men: MCpl Scott Vernelli and Cpl Tyler Crooks of 3 RCR, and their interpreter. Five more Canadians and another Afghan interpreter were seriously wounded. Canadian helicopters evacuated the dead and wounded. Hours later, a Recce Squadron Coyote patrolling in Shah Wali Kot hit an IED that killed Tpr Jack Bouthillier and Tpr Corey Hayes of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, and wounded three more Canadians.[102] The toll of four dead and nine wounded in a matter of hours during the so-called Days of Tranquility strained UN credibility in the eyes of many Canadians, and did not exactly endear Regional Command (South) to TF Kandahar.

Operations in Panjwayi District, February–March 2009

The situation in Panjwayi District was muted but volatile from February to March. An Afghan company with Canadian mentors patrolled Mushan, while M Company sortied from Sperwan Ghar to maintain the Stability Box surrounding the patrol base.

The Construction Management Team paving Route Fosters lacked vehicles but kept working nonetheless. A Squadron sortied with their Leopards from Ma'Sum Ghar when they were needed, while American and Canadian police mentors worked with the police in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and on main routes. The Joint District Coordination Centre remained the hub of security activity, and CIMIC teams continued with their work — especially dealing with District Leader Haji Baran. The balance of a kandak with its Canadian mentors was also based in Ma'Sum Ghar (see Figure 5-6 and Figure 5-6a).

As we have seen, there was substantial tension in the security line of operations in Panjwayi. Mushan was isolated, and there was increased enemy activity south of Senjaray towards Salavat. Insurgents based in Nakhonay were harassing Dand District. To make matters worse, the insurgents intimidated the cellular telephone companies into turning off their networks at night so local people could not call the Joint District Coordination Centre to report insurgent activity or ask for help. The police were not present in every community.

The demand to increase the security focus on Kandahar City led to Operation DAREDELAY (Bludgeon), a joint Canadian-Afghan operation that ran through the first half of February. In DAREDELAY, the PRT's Force Protection Company and the city police mounted a series of operations in District 2 and District 6, pro-insurgency neighbourhoods in the southwest quadrant. At the same time, Afghan police with American and Canadian mentors conducted cordon-and-search operations in Panjwayi District communities immediately west of District 2 and District 6, and the Leopards of A Squadron patrolled around and through them. Little turned up during these operations, and people told the P-OMLT mentors that it was widely known that the coalition forces were coming.[103]

According to assessments, however, DAREDELAY displaced enemy leaders, personnel, transportation, and other resources from those communities. They joined their *confrères* in Nakhonay, Khenjakak, and the communities clustered on the line of hills that became known as the Adamzai Chain.[104] LCol Barrett launched M Company on day-long company-sized patrols into Nakhonay on 10 February and into Khenjakak on 18 February. Again, little was found, but elders in Salavat and other nearby villages who watched DAREDELAY requested a permanent Afghan National Army presence in their communities.[105] Only one insurgency-related incident took place between Nakhonay and Bazaar-e Panjwayi in February, and people seemed more confident in the security forces. Information fed to the American mentor teams working with the Afghan police led the security forces to several significant insurgent facilities: safe houses, IED factories and caches. In one cache, twelve 155-mm shells, twenty 82-mm rounds, ten illumination carriers and accompanying explosive material were found and confiscated.[106]

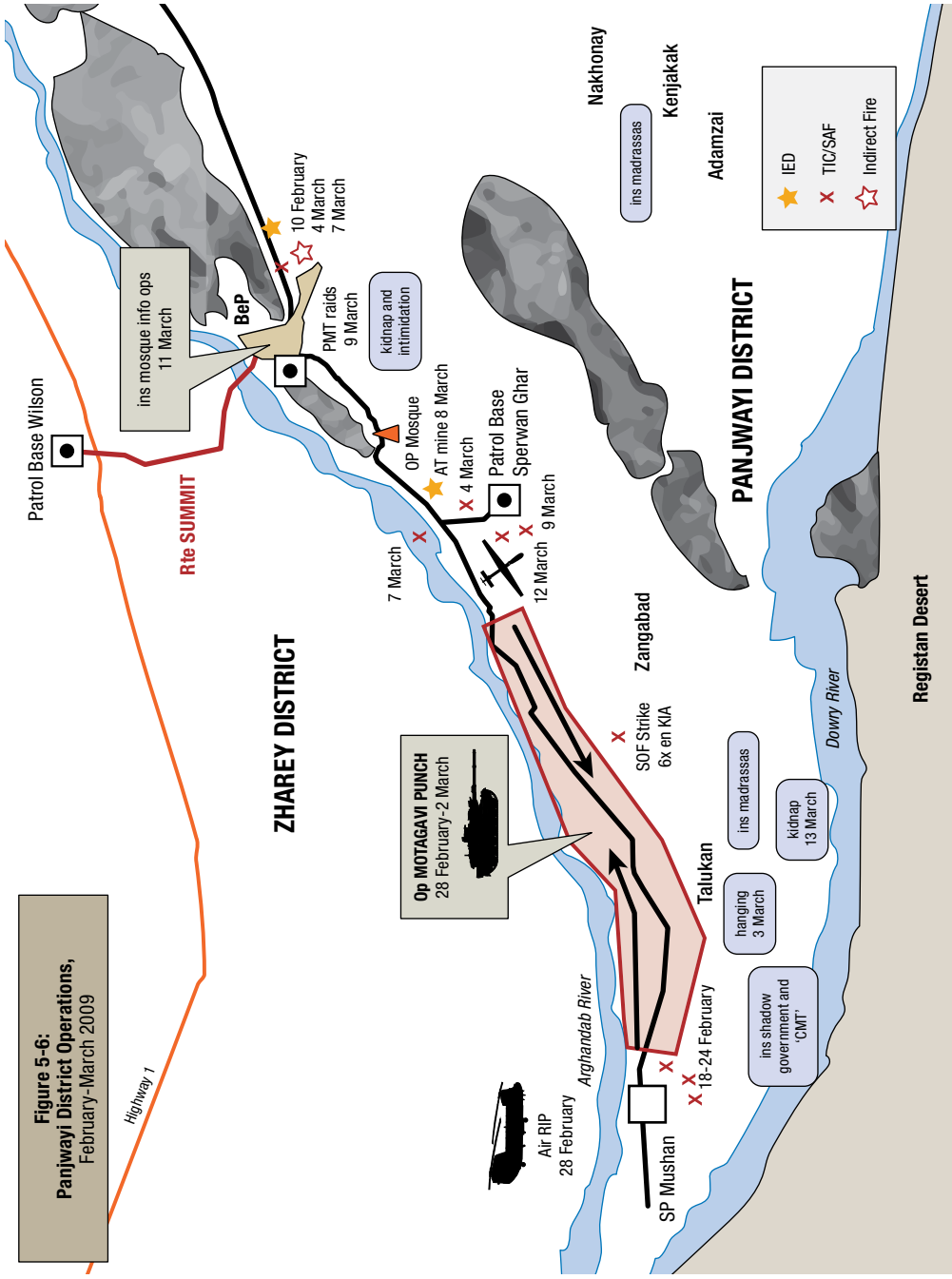

Figure 5-6: Panjwayi District Operations, February-March 2009

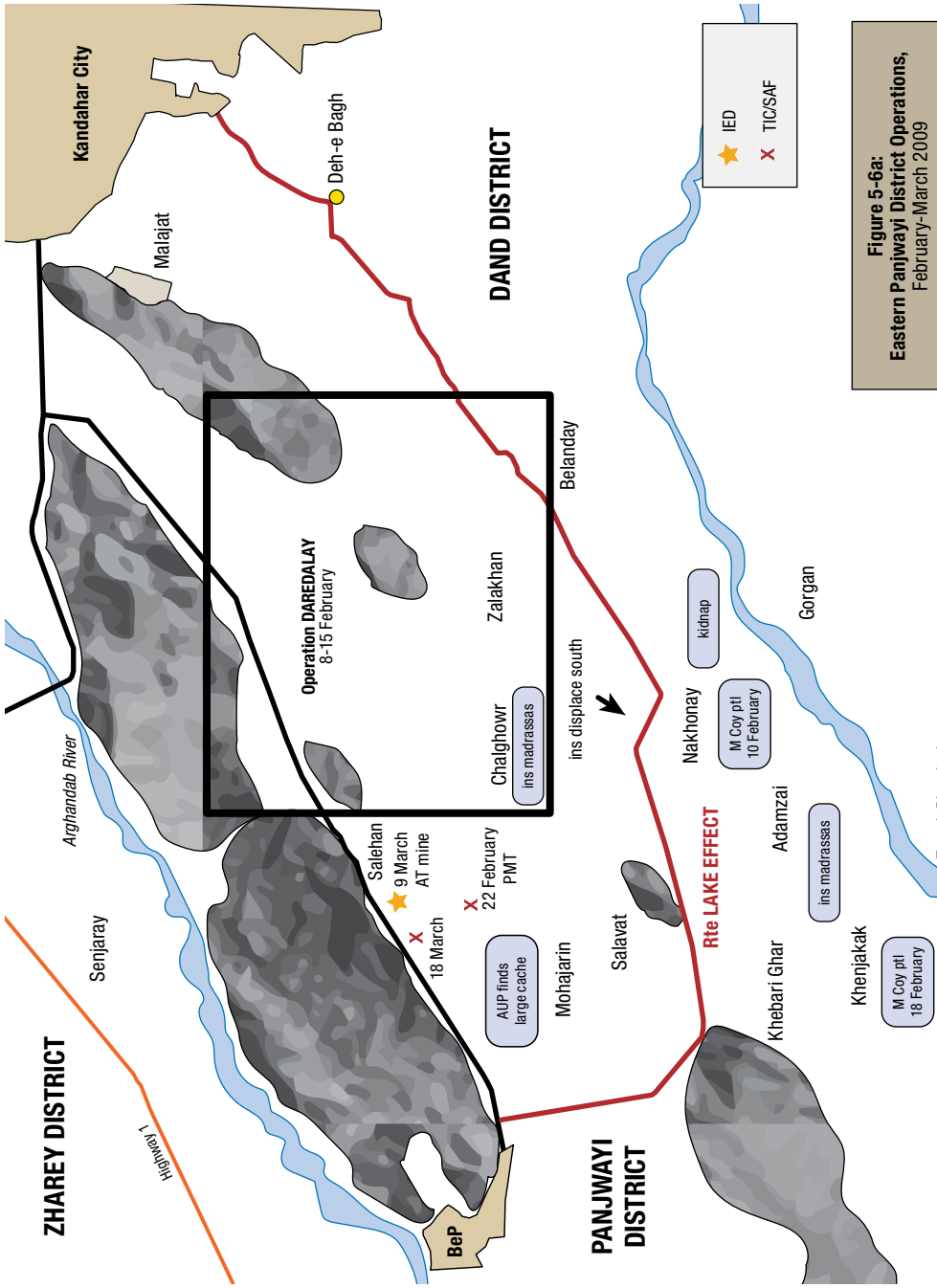

Figure 5-6a: Eastern Panjwayi District Operations, February-March 2009

Photo Credit: Author

The Joint District Coordination Centre concept reached new levels of maturity by 2009. This is the Panjwayi Joint District Coordination Centre, located in the new District Centre east of Bazaar-e Panjwayi. Eventually a District Support Team, akin to a small Provincial Reconstruction Team, took up residence.

The action shifted to Mushan towards the end of February. Afghan and Canadian patrols were in contact with enemy forces on three occasions but for the most part had freedom of movement even though they could not bring CIMIC, PSYOPS or development resources to bear on the community. One of these fire-fights is worth particular mention because it was the first direct-fire engagement by Canadian helicopters in Afghanistan. When an Afghan platoon on patrol with their mentors came under fire, the Tactical Operations Centre diverted a ScanEagle SUAV to help find the attackers. A pair of CH-146 Griffons armed with Gatling guns soon arrived to engage the ambush party and, when the Griffons ran low on fuel, they were replaced by an OH-58D Kiowa Warrior. The insurgents withdrew to escape the helicopters, and the patrol made it back to Strong Point Mushan.[107] Of note, the enemy made an abrupt shift from ICOM radios to cell phones in the middle of this engagement, indicating they were aware of various coalition ISTAR capabilities.

As for Mushan, 1-205 Brigade wanted the Afghan company at the strong point to conduct a relief in place and, with helicopters, the manoeuvre took only the few days between 28 February and 2 March. However, LCol Barrett decided to mount

Operation MOTAGAVI PUNCH down Route Fosters West at the same time as the Afghan troops were flying out. M Company and A Squadron with engineers in support launched into Talukan and fought through five contacts, taking no casualties. Orbiting UAVs spotted numerous fighting-age males, but were unable to gain the positive identification required to engage them. It was evident that the enemy understood the Canadian rules of engagement and did not unmask any capabilities that could be spotted and targeted from the air. On the second day, small groups fired on M Company three times with small arms but, again, none of the insurgents could be positively identified for targeting. On 2 March, MOTAGAVI PUNCH ended and the forces returned to base.[108]

Enemy influence continued to grow in the district despite these moves. As in Zharey, insurgents in Panjwayi levied taxes, formed their version of the Construction Management Organization, and started building roads; this activity was uncovered in late February, when observers saw requisitioned construction machinery at work west of Mushan in the "Taliban bazaar" area. There were several kidnappings throughout the district, including relatives of district shura members. Two were hanged at a mosque near Zangabad in March. Coalition forces found a pro-Taliban mullah proselytizing at a mosque right in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and a 10-man insurgent cell operating from the Bazaar-e Panjwayi area. Even more disturbing was the discovery of four insurgent madrassas, located in Chalghowr, Talukan, Mushan and Khenjakak, where fighters received indoctrination and training in the use of explosives and weapons. Far more serious than using the district as a manoeuvre area for attacks on ISAF or as a rest area for fighters operating in Zharey, this state of affairs was a direct challenge to the government of Afghanistan for control of the population in areas beyond the reach of coalition influence. Formulating a response to this challenge, however, was extremely difficult given who the district leader was, who he was connected to, and what his proclivities were.[109]

Good information came in through the Canadian-mentored police, and particularly from Colonel Faiz Mohammad Khan, the local representative of the National Directorate of Security. Police working with American mentoring teams had significant successes in taking down caches. The problem, once again, was district-level governance, in this case Haji Baran.

> Governance in Panjwayi District continues to suffer under the leadership of Haji Baran. Rumours that Baran has been fired circulated throughout Panjwayi and, while they turned out to be false, it is possible that the governor may take action on this issue next month. A number of elders in the district shura continue to boycott the weekly shura leaving it dysfunctional and unproductive.[110]

A senior Afghan intimately familiar with the situation in Panjwayi opined to Canadians that:

> If Baran is removed as district leader, it is believed he will go to Pakistan and become a senior insurgent commander. However, [Baran] is attempting to make alliances with other tribal leaders in Panjwayi to consolidate his position …

This is where the situation really got into provincial politics beyond the district-level governance layer. Provincial Council leader Ahmad Wali Karzai's brother-in-law, Arif Noorzai, a key Noorzai power-broker, intimidated the seven Noorzais on the council into encouraging Haji Baran to remain as district leader.[111] The inevitable conclusion was that, no matter what he did or did not do, Baran was protected by Ahmad Wali Karzai. The conclusion that no one really wanted to address at the time was that Ahmad Wali Karzai could influence the situation in Panjwayi, but apparently chose not to support Canadian efforts to bring professional policing, security and good governance to the people of the district.

District Chief of Police Essa Khan insisted on holding a security shura without Haji Baran present, and rebuffed CIMIC and P-OMLT personnel when they asked questions about a suspicious ambush against police on Route Fosters to which Essa's force did not respond. Baran claimed to control Bazaar-e Panjwayi, but insurgent operations were suspiciously frequent and more questions were asked. By the end of March, the National Directorate of Security commander in Kandahar City had accused the dedicated and effective Col Faiz of being too close to his Canadian mentors and abruptly told him to retire. Faiz, who worked hard to bring security to Panjwayi, was "distraught" and refused to retire.[112]

More indicators of serious rot appeared in the activities surrounding the Route Fosters paving project, which Haji Baran disliked so much that he shared his feelings with the CIMIC team. People associated with Baran extorted money from the workers, who were local Panjwayians paid out of Canadian coffers. In March, violence directed against the workers spiked, with kidnappings, small-arms fire, and even an IED in their rest area. It was easy to assume the intimidation was insurgent activity designed to block an important infrastructure project, but Construction Management Organization personnel believed that Haji Baran was behind it because he did not get his slice of the action back in the Laroche days when the project was implemented.[113]

With increased emphasis and attention on Kandahar City operations, what would become of troubled Panjwayi District?

Arghandab and Lower Shah Wali Kot District Operations, February–March 2009

By early 2009, governance had collapsed in Arghandab District. District Leader Ghulam Farooq had walked away from his post in December, and it was not until mid-February that his successor Haji Abdul Jabar agreed to take over.[114] CIMIC, which had reduced its coverage of Arghandab, eventually managed to get some development contracts signed by the remnants of the District Development Assembly.[115] When the CIMIC operators delved deeper into the situation in Arghandab, however, they discovered that most of the shura members were unfamiliar with PRT development programming. Probing further, the team came to believe that "most of the village elders live in Kandahar City and rarely venture out to the villages they represent due to security concerns."[116]

In Shah Wali Kot, the Chief of Police Haji Daro Khan, did not like the fact that the titular District Development Assembly requested bids from certain communities that wanted access to CIMIC funds. CIMIC operators were divided: was this because the DDA members were not aligned with him and he was not getting a cut, or was the DDA itself dirty? There was ongoing tension over this issue. At the very least, voter registration in Shah Wali Kot was proceeding better than in Arghandab.[117]

Maj Dean Tremblay and his Recce Squadron were in serious trouble. They remained responsible for keeping the main service route open to Tarinkot; manning FOB Frontenac; and supporting surveying and assessment operations around that jewel in the crown of Canadian development, the Dahla Dam, which was being refurbished by SNC Lavalin under Operation SAY. Due to IED strikes, Recce Squadron had already taken casualties and was down several vehicles. Spares for the Coyote surveillance vehicles had also dwindled to nothing[118] (see Figure 5-7).

As for Recce Squadron's Afghan allies, the outstanding land issues regarding Strong Point Jelawur remained unresolved into March which left the now unmentored Afghan army company in a state of limbo. The OMLT decided not to force the issue with the Afghan National Army, and instead used it to "influence 1/205 Brigade to make maximum use of their integral engineering assets to establish a new ANA strong point." The OMLT and the Task Force Engineer had prepared the ground, but awaited Afghan compliance before work could commence.[119] The ANP force under Zmaray Khan was undergoing Focused District Development during February, which in turn reduced security coverage in the district.[120] The American Police Mentoring Team remained on station to bolster the Afghan National Civil Order Police backfilling for Khan's men.

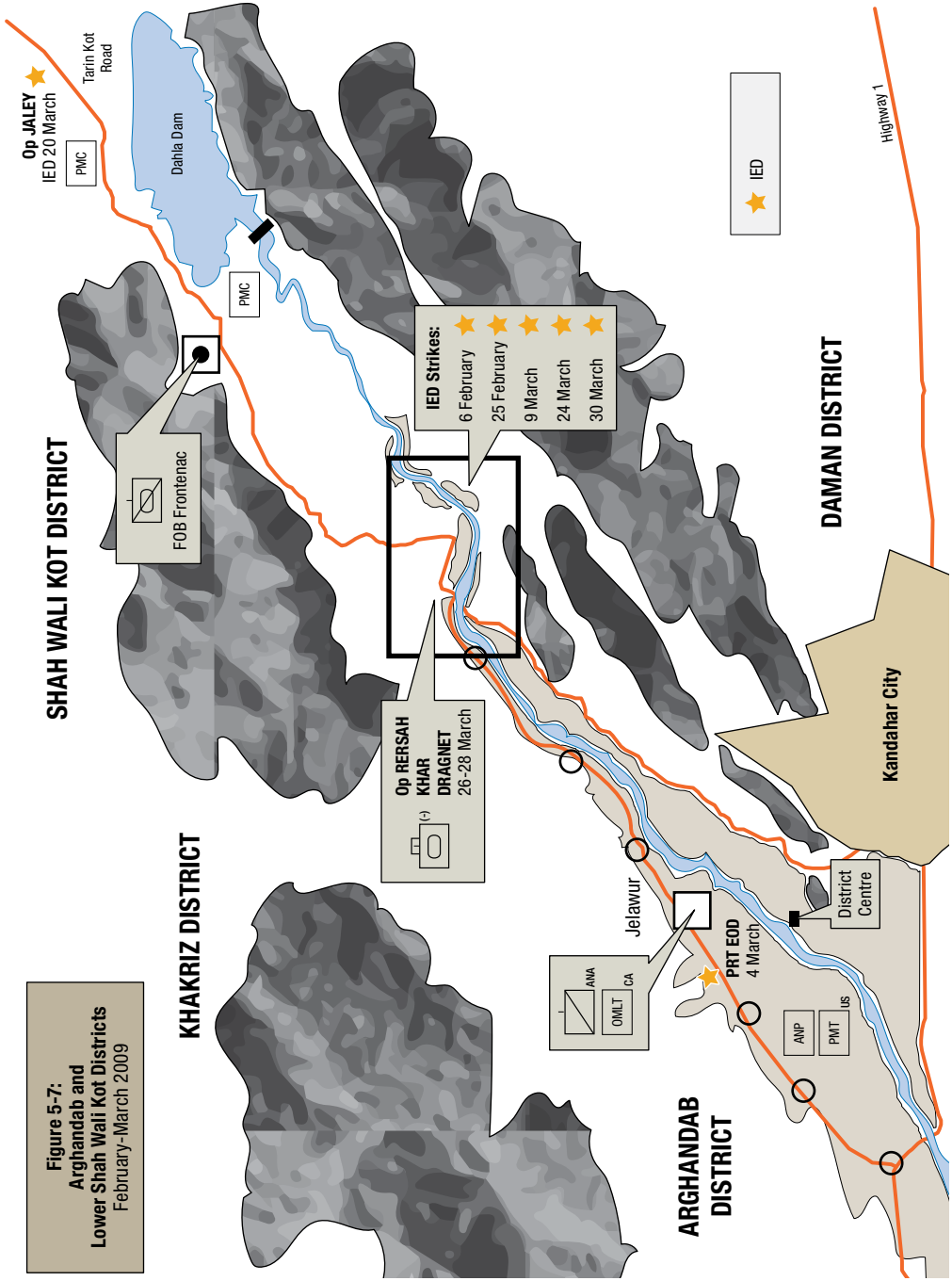

Figure 5-7: Arghandab and Lower Shah Wali Kot Districts
February-March 2009

Figure 5-7: Arghandab and Lower Shah Wali Kot Districts, February-March 2009

During the flurry of activity in and around the Dahla Dam, Recce Squadron and their allies took severe casualties from IEDs. Most of the strikes took place on Route Oregon just past Control Point Darryl, where various routes converged at the bridges over the Arghandab River. A LAV III observation post vehicle was taken out on 6 February with two wounded, then on 8 March a security recce for the dam was hit, killing Trooper Marc Diab and wounding four other soldiers. On 20 March, Trooper Jack Bouthillier and Trooper Corey Hayes died when their Coyote detonated an IED.[121]

The American police mentors were in the wrong place at the wrong time while they were assessing the community near Mansurabad on 24 March. Their up-armoured Hummer detonated a large IED, catastrophically destroying it and killing Capt Brian Bunting, Sgt Schuyler Patch, Sgt Scott Stream and Sgt Daniel Thompson. Canadian police mentors and a Recce Squadron patrol moved to assist, but it was too late. As Maj Tremblay's driver backed their vehicle, it struck an IED that did not detonate fully, forcing engineers to sweep the area.[122]

Afghan police found an IED on Route Red Dog on 4 March. The PRT quick-reaction force, which included the EOD team, responded to the find and dealt with the device. As they were withdrawing, the EOD Bison detonated another IED, a huge one that killed WO Dennis Brown of The Lincoln and Welland Regiment, Cpl Dany Fortin of 425 Squadron, and Cpl Kenneth O'Quinn of 2 CMBG Headquarters & Signals Squadron. By the end of March, coalition forces had suffered 23 casualties — 11 killed (six Canadian, five American) and 12 wounded — in the effort to keep the road open to the Dahla Dam.

BGen Vance attempted to work through Governor Wesa, Ahmad Wali Karzai of the Provincial Council, and District Leader Haji Abdul Jabar in order to "hold them accountable and responsible for the security of their regions."[123] Stern warnings issued to the people of Arghandab and Shah Wali Kot districts had little or no impact, even after a 60-man shura was held with the Arghandab and Shah Wali Kot elders; the IEDs continued. Clearly it was not in Ahmad Wali Karzai's best interests to put too much effort into Arghandab. His motives remain obscure but, when placed in the context of Arghandab events since November 2006, lack of intervention in March 2009 is not surprising.

Photo Credit: Courtesy of LCol Dean Tremblay

Photo Credit: Courtesy of LCol Dean Tremblay

Recce Squadron in Arghandab District bore the brunt of enemy improvised explosive device attacks and paid a high price in what was designated an economy of force mission tasked with keeping routes open to the Dahla Dam project.

The Canadian response was to examine establishing aerial surveillance over the area on the model similar to the programme used over Highway 1. After some analysis TF Silver Dart concluded, "Transfer of TFK ISR from Zharey-Panjwayi to Arghandab would likely return the IED threat to Zharey-Panjwayi."[124] BGen Vance told them to find a way. When CH-146 Griffons were diverted to Arghandab to provide over-watch for police operations, one was engaged with small arm fire.[125] The battle group then cut a Leopard tank troop, a LAV III infantry platoon, an engineer section, and a pair of Armoured Engineer Vehicles to Recce Squadron. The deployment of an Expedient Route-Opening Capability (EROC) suite of counter-IED vehicles was proposed, but none were available due to severe maintenance problems.

Using minimal resources, the battle group designed and mounted Operation RERSHAH KHAR DRAGNET to surge into the communities along Route Oregon between Arghandab and Shah Wali Kot to "interdict IED emplacement and boost the confidence of D Sqn soldiers."[126] The force moved to the Sayeed Alim Kalay/Dameneh area. With the Leopard tank troop in support, the infantry platoon mounted cordon and searches of the compounds. The engineers found and blew in place homemade explosive materials and then used a Badger to "deny" (i.e., destroy) the storage compound. With the operation completed by 26 March.[127] The question remained: what was to be done about Arghandab and Shah Wali Kot?

Kandahar City Operations, February–March 2009

When we last looked at operations in Kandahar City, the insurgency shifted from an assassination campaign directed against the police to a campaign targeting the voter registration process. Canadian assessments asserted that "the insurgents have undertaken a multi-pronged campaign to deter locals from taking part in the voter registration process. This campaign includes spreading rumours that voter registration centres will be targeted by suicide IED attacks, distributing night letters, physical threats and the targeting of [Voter Registration] security personnel."[128] However, it was difficult to differentiate between a specific anti-voter registration campaign and the larger campaign objectives expressed by Mullah Omar to the Quetta Shura and its Kandahar City network commanders. The Taliban leader demanded an "increased operational tempo" in the City; the networks were to "increase insurgent attacks in Kandahar City, expand insurgent recruiting and propaganda efforts in the city's mosques."[129] A significant amount of ISTAR horsepower was directed at unearthing and pre-empting enemy action in this area.

The Voter Registration Center in Kandahar was, apparently, bombed on 3 February but there was no damage, giving the Provincial Election Security Officer an excuse to close the centre 'temporarily.' Reading between the lines, Canadians at the provincial coordination centre were suspicious but had no evidence of wrongdoing.[130]

A THREATWARN issued on 2 February was deemed credible enough for TF Kandahar to surreptitiously evacuate all of the Canadian and American civilian employees from Camp Nathan Smith to Kandahar Air Field.[131] A Canadian CH-47 Chinook and its CH-146 Griffon escorts handled the personnel move in what became the Canadian Helicopter Force's first operation.[132] As the intelligence community worked to expose the threat in more detail, TF Kandahar worked up responses with allied organizations. One of these Operation DAREDELAY (Bludgeon). DAREDELAY involved a series of disrupt manoeuvres by the battle group and Afghan National Police in Panjwayi District communities southwest of the city. The PRT's Force Protection Company, working with the Afghan police, generated a patrol matrix that took them into District 2 and District 6, again to have a disruptive function. Later, DAREDELAY expanded to add Canadian CIVPOL, psychological operations personnel and EOD detachments to Force Protection Company who conducted both mobile and foot patrols with the police.[133] In addition to its disruptive and presence function, DAREDELAY clearly spooked some insurgent cells that were later assessed as part of the Jabar Agha network. After DARDELAY, special operations forces identified and targeted two of the network's leaders; when replacements were dispatched from Pakistan, coalition forces bagged them in Spin Boldak.[134]

Flailing about, the Jabar Agha network used what it had on hand to attack what targets it could. Coalition operations also disrupted an assassination attempt against Ahmad Wali Karzai, a plot that may have included infiltrating his inner coterie or his personal security force. The OCC-P passed a THREATWARN to Karzai based on Canadian information.[135] On 16 February, an IED attack on provincial Chief of Police, Matiullah Qati Khan, nearly succeeded, leaving one bodyguard dead and four wounded. A large but ineffective attack near the governor's palace on 17 February was evidently designed to take out Ghulam Haider Hamidi, the mayor of Kandahar City. Then, on 24 February, a motorcycle-borne IED targeted LGen Sardar Mohammad Zazai, commander of 205 Corps, missing him but wounding four others. The Mayor was 're-targeted' on 15 March but the assassination team missed, killing six. The opposition were obviously down to their C Team, and the insurgent leadership temporarily suspended operations to lick their wounds and contemplate their lack of success.

The Afghans had had enough, and told the Canadians that they intended to conduct a series of intelligence-led cordon-and-search operations using forces from the ANA, the ANP and the National Directorate of Security. The Afghans had drawn up ambitious plans for two major operations per week in the city and, with neither fanfare nor detailed planning or coordination, they launched the first one on 29 March, moving 100 police, 100 soldiers and 20 National Directorate of Security officers into District 9 in the north end. The take was 15 people on an NDS watch list, three fake police officers armed with AK-47s but possessing no identification cards, a bomb-maker who specialized in suicide vests,

and several weapons caches. Though uncoordinated, the operation demonstrated to the somewhat surprised Canadians that the Afghans were quite capable of getting things done–when they wanted to and on their own time.[136]

All the while, the CIMIC teams from the PRT sortied out of Camp Nathan Smith. The new direction taken by TF Kandahar meant that detailed assessments of the city's basic services were required, something that involved visits to the water plant and the fire services. Their assessment of the water treatment plant was particularly telling.

> [The water treatment plant] employs 63 persons. Apparently, no employee has a post-secondary type level of education. Many of the employees have 20–30 years of field experience. The World Bank has provided 3,000 water meters for the purposes of metering homes and other users to facilitate the collection of revenue. These meters have been delivered, along with other flow-measuring devices approximately eight months ago and are sitting in sea containers. … Previously purchased lab equipment is untouched in the lab building covered in dust. All instructions and directions are in English.[137]

As for the fire services:

> The det commander was not impressed that the patrol was there. There have been many visits in the past and nothing has come from them. The fire station responds only to fire calls. To do this they have two operational vehicles that are approximately 40 years old and are showing their age. Training is hands-on and verbally from what the commanders learn when they go to Kabul. There is no formal training for firefighters. The Station Commander said the department responds to three or four calls per day averaging about 15–16 per week.[138]

CIMIC operators and CIDA staff did all they could to help the mayor and his fledgling staff build a picture of what worked and what did not, but the task was gargantuan.

The staff at TF Kandahar HQ improved their awareness of the situation in Kandahar City throughout 2009 as more resources were directed at understanding what was going on. The city's key power-brokers and their activities were by now generally associated with particular districts (see Figure 5-8). Haji Murcha Agha, the anti-Taliban religious leader, retained widely varying levels of influence in District 3, District 6 and District 7. The Popalzai and Barakzai communities dominated District 3, a stable, mixed urban-rural area with little insurgent presence. District 6 had Barakzai, Alikozai and Popalzai residents in its urban portion and Noorzai in its rural portion, while District 7 was a rural area with a mixed Noorzai-Alikozai population. Both District 6 and District 7 were considered transit points for insurgents moving in from Arghandab, Zharey and Panjwayi districts.[139]

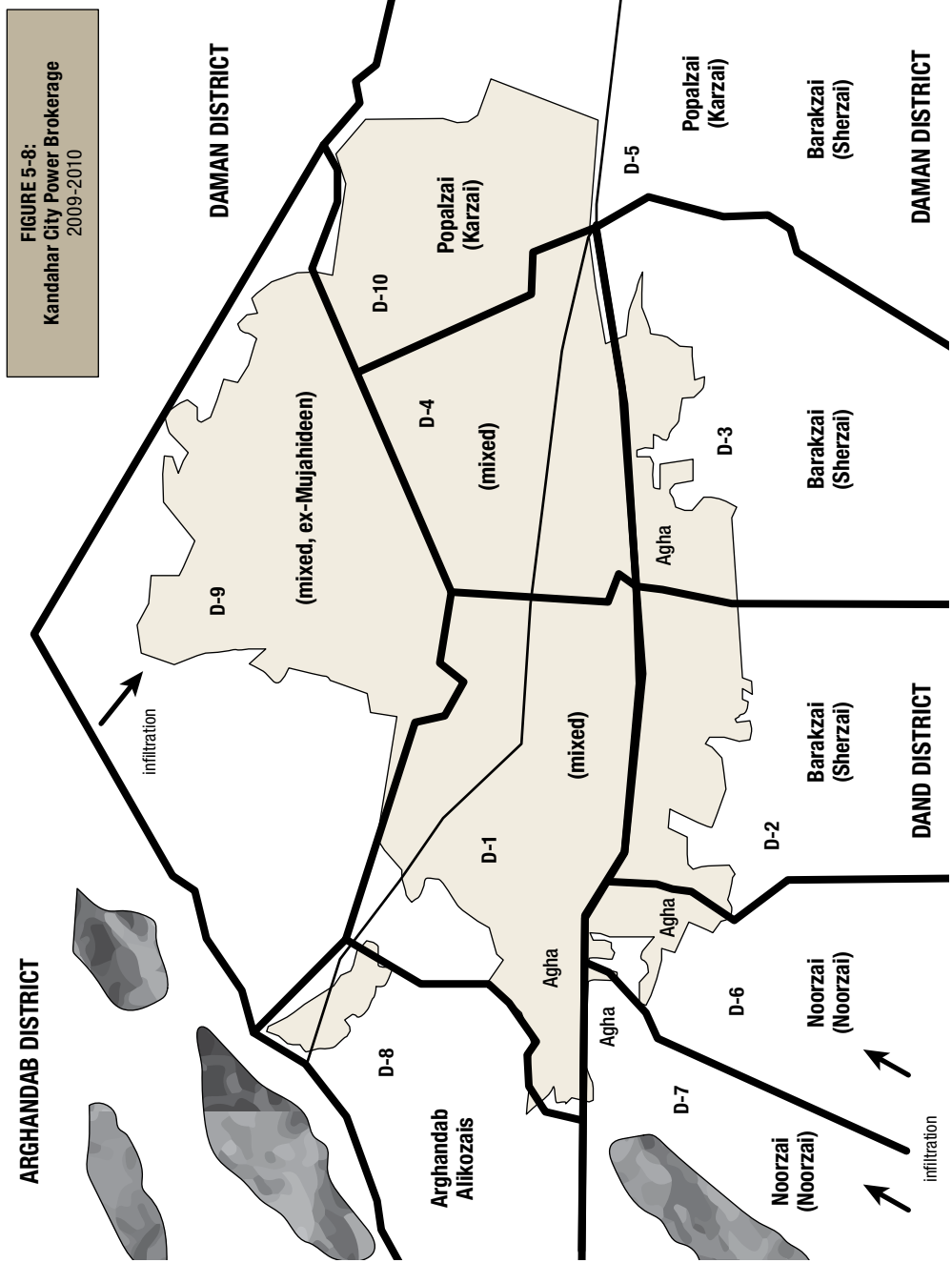

Figure 5-8: Kandahar City Power Brokerage, 2009-2010

Haji Arif Noorzai, the brother-in-law of Provincial Council leader Ahmad Wali Karzai, was connected to the police in Kandahar City through his brother Mirwais. Noorzai's area of influence tended to be in the Malajat area south of Districts 6 and 7, which, not surprisingly, was dominated by the Noorzai people. Malajat, as we have seen, was the historical terminus of the Taliban rat-line from Panjwayi District.

The Sherzais, forced out of the governance game by the Karzais, had by this point consolidated their commercial activities into several construction companies and were deeply involved in land development in Districts 2, 3, and 5. District 2 was mostly Barakzai, and the population of District 5 was a mix of Popalzai and Achakzai, and sedentary Kutchie nomads. The Karzais were influential in District 5 and District 10, which was mostly Popalzai. Ahmad Wali Karzai had substantial interests in transport and security companies based in District 10 and major real estate holdings in District 2, District 3, District 5 and District 10.[140]

Districts 1 and 4 consisted of the Old City and were tribally diverse: they were in effect the governance and economic centres of the city where all entities met to do business. District 8 was in many ways an extension of Alikozai power in Arghandab in the rural areas, but of mixed tribal makeup in the city proper. Finally, in District 9, a significant number of retired or unemployed 1980s-era *mujahideen* lived alongside service workers, displaced people, and a variety of transient unskilled labourers. None of the Kandahar power-brokers appeared to have or desired any significant influence over District 9.[141]

Insurgents infiltrated into the urban parts of District 9 from the countryside of northern Arghandab District and received support for their operations through the southwestern rat-line from Panjwayi and Dand. Clearly, the dynamics of District 6 interested TF Kandahar because of the connection to Dand and Panjwayi, and then back to Zharey and Maywand districts. If TF Kandahar was to defend Kandahar City in close, the relationship between Dand, Malajat and District 6 had to be understood and developed.

Where Will the Americans Go?

By early 2009, the Americans had solidified their plans for the incoming force laydown, with the Stryker Brigade Combat Team and a combat aviation brigade slated to deploy to Kandahar Province immediately and, later, a divisional headquarters to take over Regional Command (South). To accompany this expanded American military presence, the State Department, USAID and other agencies would flow in as well, including seasoned veterans of the war in Iraq.[142] This flood of resources had the potential to completely destabilize the structure, strategy, measures of effectiveness, and programs built by the David Mulroney's Afghanistan Task Force in Kandahar. On the military side, it had the potential to significantly reduce Canadian saliency in the overall coalition effort, not just in the province.

Canadian commanders had fair warning in the fall of 2008 that the Stryker Brigade was coming to Kandahar as part of the McKiernan surge but it was unclear as to where it would operate.[143] TF Kandahar believed that Alikozai advocate Sarah Chayes was influencing ISAF commander Gen McKiernan to get a Stryker battalion stationed in Arghandab District. This assessment became a significant issue in some Ottawa quarters because of the optics of having the Dahla Dam project protected by Americans.[144]

There were concerns in Canadian quarters, however, regarding the Stryker Brigade's structure and its suitability to the Kandahar environment. It was a high-tech mechanized infantry brigade "enabled" for "network-centric" warfare against a more conventional opponent. It had no integral CIMIC or PSYOPS teams, UAVs or a white situation awareness cell, and it had little or no construction engineering capability. In effect, the formation lacked the tools it needed to combat a decentralized counterinsurgency, though the nuclear-biological-chemical detection unit was re-roled to handle some of these tasks. Stryker Brigade units tended to be wedded to their vehicles and their technology, unlike Canadian infantry who easily transitioned from mounted operations in LAV IIIs to dismounted patrolling to air assaults with helicopters and back again. Some Canadian planners worried that Stryker Brigade units in Kandahar Province would become road-bound and subjected to the insurgency's favourite weapon, the IED. And, as we have seen over the past several chapters, not all operating areas were accessible by road.[145]

While the staff at TF Kandahar HQ worked out the geographical aspects of the American influx with their U.S. Army counterparts, DFAIT and CIDA struggled to come up with an approach to maintain Canadian influence in the province. They wanted an integrated Canadian-American team, building on the existing PRT relationships. They offered to let the Americans co-sign the Kandahar Action Plan review document when it was completed. They asked the Americans to deploy somebody equivalent to the RoCK. They expressed the idea that Canada retain control of the civilian aspects of the mission until 2011 through the RoCK and by extension the civilian component of the PRT. The Americans were fully aware of Canadian concerns which revolved around "Canada's desire to have a say in the building and tasking of allied military and civil missions in [Regional Command (South)]",[146] and were willing to go some distance to "placate" Canada in the hope that Canada would extend its combat mission past the 2011 deadline.[147]

What really concerned DFAIT and CIDA was the fate of the signature projects, especially the Dahla Dam, recognizing that "[l]ack of Canadian participation will degrade Canadian influence in Kandahar Province". What concerned TF Kandahar, on the other hand, was how the Americans intended to handle district-level development programming and how that fit in with the Vance headquarters plans. CIDA was not really focused on the districts, TF Kandahar noted, there was "little engagement from the civilian side",[148] and TF Kandahar

was not really interested in the Dahla Dam. Both civilians and soldiers acknowledged that the Americans intended to deploy District Support Teams, small district-level organizations resembling the Canadians' "evolved" Joint District Coordination Centre or "PRT forward" but with permanent civilian staff. A pseudo District Support Team comprising USAID staffers, a Police Mentoring Team and Canadian CIMIC operators was already working with 2-2 Infantry in Maywand District, but more formalized American District Support Teams were coming with Stryker Brigade for the districts they would operate in. DFAIT believed that the PRT Project Synchronization Board was a key tool to retain Canadian influence in development and, when alerted to the possibilities of the District Support Teams, they explored asking the Americans to integrate their people into them.[149]

The matter came to a head over the issue of who would command Arghandab District in the new order. Arghandab was seen as a disrupt zone by TF Kandahar, (like Senjaray, Zharey and Panjwayi), with the main effort about to go into Operation KALAY in Dand district and then into follow on KALAYs in Panjwayi. One KALAY might go into Arghandab if the conditions presented themselves. The Afghans were certainly not prioritizing Afghan army deployment for Arghandab, nor was the Kandahar political leadership prioritizing that district either. The only plan that recognized Arghandab as a primary effort area was the nearly-obsolete Kandahar Action Plan championed by CIDA and DFAIT.[150]

The long-standing insistence by the civilian Afghanistan Task Force that the six priorities and three signature projects should be the only focus of the Canadian effort combined with personal antagonisms between civilian and military personnel generated a toxic environment. This effectively alienated the Canadian military leadership of the Afghan mission who now were quite willing to turn Arghandab over to the Stryker Brigade. The fact was that the Afghans were not prioritizing Arghandab and it was their country. TF Kandahar's view was that they simply did not have the Canadian resources required to cover Arghandab, the Americans were coming in, we were both allies in Kandahar, and who cared who controlled Arghandab as long as it was not the enemy?[151] In other Canadian quarters, an unofficially expressed attitude was that, if CIDA and DFAIT wanted so badly to distance themselves from the Canadian military effort, so be it. It was now up to CIDA and DFAIT to negotiate with the Americans on fitting security for the Dahla Dam project in among the many issues and priorities of the new structure.

In briefings given in May 2009, the incoming task force commanding officers were told that the American battalion in Maywand would remain under Canadian command for the time being, and TF Kandahar would continue to handle Zharey, Panjwayi, Dand and Kandahar City. The Stryker Brigade would cover Spin Boldak, Arghandab, Shah Wali Kot,

Khakrez and points north and east, and a squadron of the Royal Air Force Regiment would continue to handle Kandahar Air Field and its vicinity. The question remained: when would all of these movements happen?[152]

Relief in Place: April 2009

The relief in place brought with it several structural changes to TF Kandahar. The All Source Intelligence Centre, now with even more personnel, was led by Maj Alain Chabot. The Task Force Headquarters signals organization was designated a Signals Squadron under the command of LCol Gary Whelan. The Engineer Support Coordination Centre, the Engineer Support Unit, the Construction Management Organization and the Counter-IED Squadron were placed under the Task Force Engineer, LCol Mike Gilmore.

The primary units of the new rotation were:

- the 2 R22eR Battle Group under LCol Jocelyn (Jo) Paul;
- the PRT under LCol Carl Turenne;
- the OMLT under Col Gregory Burt;
- the NSE under LCol Ann-Marie Tardif;
- Military Police Company under Maj Martin Laflamme; and
- Health Support Services under LCol Danielle Savard.

LCol Hurlbut's 2-2 Infantry was also scheduled to rotate out in June, to be replaced by the 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment under LCol Reik Andersen.

The battle group reverted to three infantry companies mounted in LAV IIIs: A Company (Maj Charles Bolduc); B Company (Maj Tim Arsenault) and C Company (Maj Steve Jourdain). Its armour elements were C Squadron, The Lord Strathcona's Horse, commanded by Maj John Cochrane in Leopard tanks; and B Squadron, 12e Régiment blindé du Canada, under Maj Jean-François Cauden, in Coyotes. The artillery component was Batterie X, 5e Régiment d'artillerie légère du Canada, commanded by Maj J.P. Duval, and the field engineers were 51e Escadron du Génie de combat under Maj Yannick Pepin.[153]

The military component of the PRT underwent a significant reorganization. The P-OMLTs were transferred from the OMLT to the PRT, and there were discussions about moving the Construction Management Organization there as well.

Implementing LCol Dana Woodworth's Stabilization Company concept, BGen Vance and LCol Turenne merged the personnel of Force Protection Company, CIMIC Company and the P-OMLT to form Stab A and Stab B. Stab A, commanded by Maj Frédéric Jean, was responsible for activities in Kandahar City, while Stab B under Maj Marc Verret was the spearhead for operations in the rural districts.[154]

BGen Vance's intent, as briefed to the incoming task force, remained the following:[155]

1. stabilize Kandahar City;
2. stabilize the key village approaches with plan KANTOLO;
3. maintain a focus on the population;
4. work with the Afghan security forces on domestic operations in the city;
5. maintain close coordination of all moving parts; and
6. disrupt enemy forces with combat forces away from the population.

This last point is important. President Karzai increasingly intervened in any incident where coalition forces accidentally killed civilians throughout early 2009. This was not only a personal issue with Karzai, it was also an election issue. Too much attention focused on this issue could have jeopardized the political process.[156] And, in any event, the insurgency exploited these tragic events for its own purposes. Note also that all of these points were geared towards immediate and pressing security needs related to the city and its inhabitants, not long-term development efforts.

Capacity-Building: Policing

The ongoing need to coordinate all police mentoring and training activities in the province was recognized by the previous Canadian headquarters in 2008 and, as a result, TF Kandahar chaired a coordination meeting that included representatives from all of the American and Canadian military and civilian police organizations. The lack of Afghan participation was deliberate: "It was acknowledged that this house was in such disarray, there's no point in bringing the Afghans in to see it. We need to get this in order, then bring the Afghans in with a coherent plan."[157]

Working with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police contingent, Maj Darren McCrank and Capt Mike Gaber played a role in identifying the entities involved in policing and building a matrix of their various mandates. This took some time, but they learned that the key issue was how the Americans funded overseas policing activities. Under American law, the US armed forces could not be allocated money from the US Government to train police. That was a State Department task, who contracted it out to DynCorp. Yet American military personnel were mentoring Afghan police. Where were the financial resources for that activity going to come from? The Canadian issue was that DFAIT would or could only fund certain aspects of police training, while the RCMP had no money of its own to disperse on it. The Canadian Army, however, had the Commander's Contingency Fund. And military police. Goals also differed. Some organizations prioritized "briefing statistics to Congress" as opposed to generating quality forces on the ground.[158]

Another understated Canadian success was identifying which organization wanted to train which type of police ('beat cops', militia, or gendarmerie) and then allocate or push them in that direction. For example, ISAF and Regional Command (South) wanted to train professional policemen, the 'beat cops.' However, the specialists at the two commands were forced to acknowledge that the Afghans were "illiterate" and had to "acknowledge they don't have the abstract tools to understand what a constitutional rule of law is." The American Afghan Regional Security Integration Commands also wanted to train beat cops, but "they were a lot less patient and would just try and achieve tactical effects by treating them like militia, even though they knew their mandate and their end state was to create trained cops." The Canadian Police OMLTs, on the other hand, generally focused on "combat survival of those ANP, making sure they stayed alive. Sometimes it was logistical and well-being support, life skills." The Canadians cut across all three models. The RCMP and CIVPOL focused on "investigations, forensics, actually convicting criminals."[159]

By 2009, the Canadians involved in police capacity building realized that it was increasingly difficult to leverage influence in provincial policing structures. This related directed to the American influx and it "was hard for people in Ottawa to realize we'd given up a lot of battle space … It seemed almost an arrogance to not acknowledge that we're playing a smaller role in the province."[160] That said, several important contributions were made in the policing realm in 2009.

The first was the realization of Superintendent Joe McAllister's dream of establishing an officer training academy at Camp Nathan Smith next to the PRT. Instead of traveling to Kabul to attend the German-run facility there, officer training could take place in Kandahar itself. Canada later expanded this training to a facility east of the city which in turn laid the groundwork for another important achievement.

More police were required for security during the 2009 elections, and they would not come from Kabul. Run over three months, the Rapid Accelerated Security Course was responsible for deploying 170 more police by August 2009. The P-OMLT and the American police mentors worked with district chiefs of police throughout the province to recruit suitable candidates, and the CIVPOL trained them. Canadian mentors also discovered lost or forgotten sea containers of weapons, vehicles and equipment, and arranged for this materiel to be used to equip the new police.

Fundamental cultural issues made it difficult to link the evolving police force with Afghan law. The illiteracy rate was astronomical. There was a vast gulf of difference "over the concept of the value of human life", and the whole population appeared to be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Societal despair and fatalism were other obstacles the Canadians confronted. There were serious disconnects between ground truth reality in Kandahar and what was happening back in Canada. Capt Mike Gaber noted that, while they were trying to coordinate police and rule-of-law activities:

> We would discuss how to reconcile Canadian government priorities with what actually mattered to an Afghan. Canada's signature projects were great — if brief. They were noble and lofty in their ideal but whether a girls' school mattered to the Afghans, the answer was no. We even discussed it with DFAIT. It was recognized they were put between a rock and hard place … there were cultural differences between the DFAIT people in Afghanistan and the DFAIT folks who were actually pulling the strings back in Ottawa. It was scary … [there was a climate of fear] and also the cliques and power groups within that whole organization and who they're subscribing to and whose intent they want to accomplish in Afghanistan.[161]

Supporting TF 1-09

The National Support Element for TF 1-09, led by LCol Ann-Marie Tardif resembled the NSEs of previous rotations in structure and size, weighing in at 751 personnel (426 military and 325 civilian). The supply and transport, maintenance, contracting support and welfare functions at Kandahar Air Field remained as before.

With the change in operational concept under Vance as well as increased airlift capabilities, however, the NSE detachments in the forward areas required some modification. The NSE laydown significantly evolved during this period. When the new rotation arrived, Canadian elements needed support in 14 locations: Camp Nathan Smith in Kandahar City, and thirteen bases and outposts in the districts of Zharey and Panjwayi. By mid-tour, several police sub-stations in Zharey had been turned over to the Afghan National Police, and a series of facilities — including a new district centre — had been built in Dand to support the key village approaches set out in the plan for Operation KANTOLO.

These changes increased the dispersion of forces at platoon level (instead of company level). Close cooperation with TF Engineers was required for the transfer of existing Canadian-built infrastructure to the Afghans and Americans, and the construction and stocking of new facilities.[162]

Ultimately, the NSE's forward elements remained based around the NSE Detachment as a basic sub-unit. Each detachment retained supply, fuel, recovery, food, ammunition management, transport and welfare functions. These were located at FOB Wilson; FOB Ma'Sum Ghar; Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar; and later in Dand. The Provincial Reconstruction Team also had a detachment that was geared more towards postal and welfare functions. The NSE also maintained a quick reaction force at Camp Nathan Smith.[163]

The NSE detachments were co-located with detachments of the Engineer Support Unit that were responsible for site utilities: power and water supply, and services such as ablutions, wastewater handling and electrical distribution. These tradesmen, who were usually employed as base maintenance personnel in Canada, were in short supply and had to move back and forth from site to site. As LCol Mike Gilmore noted, "In Afghanistan space does not equal time. Even though FOB Wilson and FOB Ma'Sum Ghar were 15 kilometers apart, that could be a half-day patrol at the platoon level." In time some ESU personnel even cross-trained themselves in a variety of skills.[164]

As in previous rotations the NSE generated Combat Logistics Patrols as required. Contract Jingle Trucks were employed for noncritical commodities and construction materials, while CCAT Mi-17 helicopters handled transportation delivery tasks in permissive environments, which in turn freed up the CH-47 Chinooks for tactical employment. These movements were all coordinated in the LOG Ops Centre at Kandahar Air Field. For the most part logistics support movements were uneventful during this rotation.[165]

One of NSE's most serious challenges in the first half of 2009 was the high rate of battle damage among fighting vehicles, which threatened to overwhelm the maintenance and repair facilities at KAF. When TF Kandahar reported that "there are no longer any operational stock vehicles", the resulting plan to redistribute the functioning fighting vehicles caused "a degradation to the overall operational capabilities of TFK." The staff modelling on projected vehicle losses concluded that "conservative analysis predicts that, if losses continue at the current rate, an entire sub-unit will be without [fighting] vehicles" by July or August. Even more shocking was the operational toll on the Coyote recce and surveillance vehicles, which were "being depleted at a rapid rate."[166] The technicians and mechanics did what they could to return as many vehicles as possible to service, but those judged BLR — Beyond Local Repair — needed to be replaced outright.

Signals support had evolved considerably by 2009. Back in 2007, the signals effort was decentralized. There was a signals troop; the J6 Branch at JTF Afghanistan HQ; the Mobile Electronic Warfare Teams; and as many Technical Assistance Visits from Canada as possible to bolster numbers. There were still issues with budgeting, mid-term planning, and operations (there was no operations cell). In an earlier rotation the J6, a major, was also designated as the CO of the Signals Squadron, but this was more of a paper change than anything as there were still personnel caps restricting the structure. Later that year, the rank of the J6 position was raised to lieutenant-colonel, and 15 more signals personnel were added permanently.[167]

In 2009, signals in JTF Afghanistan shifted from a staff- and infrastructure-driven organization to an operations-oriented one. This was in part due to the intense workups that the signals personnel at 1 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group did prior to deploying with TF 1-09 which in turn was based on experience gained over the previous two years. For the most part, there was tension between those who focused on 'strategic' level garrison, day-to-day communications in Canada and those signals personnel involved in 'tactical' level communications and their interaction with 'operational' level issues in the Afghanistan environment.[168] In some ways, this awkward relationship replicated the All Source Intelligence Centre problem of 2006. Was the communications system in Afghanistan supposed to be focused on meeting Ottawa's requirements, or Kandahar's? How should the organizational structure at Kandahar Air Field reflect both requirements?

By 2009, the signals laydown included both microwave and VHF radio in every piece of Canadian tactical infrastructure. Canadian signallers even managed to extend the range of their VHF systems from 30 to 100 kilometers by tweaking the equipment and siting it skillfully. The TacNet secure communications system, originally deployed in mid-2007, was completely rebuilt by 2008 and improved still more by 2009; when TF 1-09 took the field, TacNet was considered a stable system. Its data were pushed down to the lowest possible level of operations, which reaped dividends once the battle group started to conduct more distributed operations. Wiki-based unit and formation communications, also pioneered in 2007, were also considered mature systems in 2009.[169]

The Counter-IED Fight Continues

By 2009, counter-IED efforts included a combination of daily dismounted route sweeps by Afghan police and army units; over-watch by UAVs and helicopters; EROC vehicles clearing routes ahead of operations or on their own; and combining surveillance systems with airstrikes against emplacement teams. As before, the Counter-IED Squadron handled site and device exploitation, and in-theatre training and awareness. Armed and unarmed UAVs worked with aircraft carrying precision-guided munitions were assigned to 'kill boxes',

areas selected based on IED event frequency. This system, Operation KASSAT, was in play by December 2008. When the ground sweeps were coordinated with Operation KASSAT, two new operations emerged: Operation SANGA and Operation RERSHAH KHAR. These were in place by January 2009 covering routes in Zharey including Highway 1.[170]

In February the whole system was revamped to include route sweeps, sweeps by EROC and route-clearance packages, and coverage of Highway 1, Route Summit, Route Fosters and Route Lake Effect by helicopters and UAVs patrolling in dedicated boxes. As more and more Canadian UAVs arrived and TF Silver Dart started aerial patrols, the combined counter-IED effort was re-designated Operation DALBOR (Acrobat). When the kill boxes were renamed "shield boxes", it became DALBOR SHIELD.[171]

Photo Credit: Author

With an increase in dismounted patrolling and cordon-and-search operations, the need for tactical protection from enemy improvised explosive devices resulted in the deployment of explosive detection dog teams, brought in under contract. This is one such team preparing to lead a foot patrol in Panjwayi district.

TF Kandahar already had access to constant surveillance in the form of its Hostile Artillery Locating (HALO) sound-ranging system, Lightweight Counter-Mortar Radars (LCMRs), Mobile Electronic Warfare Teams (MEWTs), and Coyote reconnaissance and surveillance vehicles but, due in part to doctrinal obstacles, Canadian commanders never fused these

capabilities into a system. Only the Coyotes were electro-optical, and the battle group kept them deployed in Arghandab District to patrol roads in classic recce fashion. In 2008, the Thompson rotation noted that an ally was emplacing unattended ground sensors (UGS) in the Spin Boldak area and sought to acquire a similar capability. When tested on Route Lake Effect, however, the Scorpion UGS proved to be "marginal at best": the sensors were mistaken for IEDs and destroyed by friendly forces, stolen by locals, or otherwise disappeared.[172]

UAVs had to land, patrolling troops had to return to base, and sensor crews needed rest. Systems were overtasked and sometimes used for targeting purposes that did not involve C-IED. One system was promising, however. Balloons have more than a century of use in warfare, but balloons fitted with high-resolution thermal imaging cameras were new. The US Army used these 'aerostats' in Iraq for surveillance in 2006 and interest in employing them for what became known as 'persistent surveillance' grew in Canadian circles throughout 2008. TF Kandahar put in a request for such a system in September 2008 to cover the Highway 1-SUMMIT junction but the Canadian acquisition process was glacial at best.[173] Pressure to get aerostats deployed as quickly as possible continued to build from Kandahar.

The deadly one-upsmanship game between the explosive ordnance disposal teams and the IED makers continued. The insurgents eventually caught on to the EROC's capabilities and developed low-tech means to defeat them. For example, fertilizer distributed under the CIDA Wheat Seed programme and acquired by the insurgents was used to produce homemade explosive which was then loaded into plastic jugs. There was little metal content. The anti-IED culvert covers were prised off by enemy emplacers, who then tunneled at right angles to the culvert and stuffed the cavities full of home-made explosive jugs. A casual look into the culvert would reveal nothing, especially after the grate was reattached. When Operation DALBOR resulted in dead IED emplacers near culverts, the insurgents started tunnelling under Highway 1 from nearby compounds; in one case, 19 jugs containing 700 pounds of homemade explosive — enough to destroy any vehicle in existence — were secreted under the pavement.[174] During the course of 2009, Counter-IED personnel learned that IED factories in Pakistan were supplying devices equipped with radio-controlled detonators that could not be jammed by existing Canadian systems. This intelligence led to a crash effort to develop new countermeasures.[175]

When Operation DALBOR generated significant casualties among the more experienced enemy emplacement teams, the insurgents shifted to use teenagers and children to do the job. This approach was first identified in June 2009, when a horrified Canadian exploitation team found and evacuated five wounded children who had accidentally triggered their own pressure-plate IED; the Afghan soldiers protecting the engineers told them that the lead

emplacer was a 15-year-old boy. Clearly, the enemy was putting children on the roads to be killed by Operation DALBOR and, thus, generate bad press for the Canadians, inflame the local population, and people back home in Canada.[176]

Careful observation of Canadian and Afghan techniques led the insurgents to lay IEDs after the morning route sweep. Coalition forces countered this pattern by changing their timetables and adding a second daily route sweep. Then the insurgents placed "defensive" antipersonnel mines next to their "offensive" route devices. C-IED recommended that all sub-units be equipped with mine/metal detectors to the lowest possible level. This would in theory reduce the dependency on combat engineers and reduce dismounted casualties. Once again, the glacial Canadian procurement process would not supply these detectors until 2010.[177]

Similarly, during this time the number of Explosive Detection Dog teams increased from 12 to 48. Previous rotations requested this increase due to the IED threat but were blocked by Public Works and Government Services Canada because that entity was afraid to deal with anything resembling a private security contractor after the Blackwater revelations in Iraq. LCol Mike Gilmore, the Task Force Engineer, brought the issue directly to the Associate Deputy Minister from PWGSC, François Guimont, when the ADM was in Kandahar. Guimont promised to look into it, but follow-up by TF Kandahar hit a wall of silence. This stalemate forced TF Kandahar to find another way to acquire this capability and, by the summer of 2009, "bomb dogs" and their handlers accompanied Canadian patrols whenever possible, saving untold numbers of Canadians from death or maiming.[178]

It was not clear if the insurgents deliberately targeted EOD robots, but one machine, the venerable Johnny 5, triggered and was "killed" by a pressure-plate IED while rendering safe another device.[179] On the plus side, the exploitation lab was partially up and operating by July 2009. The MDEC ultimately gave the counter-IED fight significantly expanded local analytical capability and reduced reliance on allies in this field once the bugs were worked out. There were also three full suites of EROC vehicles that were available for operations just in time for the summer fighting season.

From GRIZZLY to KANTOLO, April–May 2009

BGen Vance and his staff refined Plan KANTOLO and continued to build political support for it: "The hardest part about it was not convincing Afghans; ISAF loved it; it was convincing Ottawa"[180]. David Mulroney continued to block KANTOLO well into April. It took the rest of the month, with RoCK Ken Lewis working the Ottawa system, to make any headway, but "certain personalities in that group basically destroyed all possible movement forward."[181] One officer credited Ken Lewis with "talking Mulroney off the ledge … He suggested Mulroney solve our staff shortages and get out of our

Photo Credit: Author

Explosive ordnance disposal robots were given nicknames from science fiction films (this may be a picture of the legendary 'Johnny 5', 'killed' by a pressure-plated improvised explosive device), and were used time and again to render safe enemy bombs. On one occasion, a critically wounded Taliban suicide bomber fought back against a 'bot as the crew manoeuvred to dismantle his bomb vest.

shorts."[182] The face-saving argument was that the concept was not the problem, but elements in Ottawa "weren't sure they could program funds and level of effort to the stabilization equation of their whole-of-government actors, but they agreed and they did."[183] According to another officer, Vance's words to Mulroney and the other bureaucrats in Ottawa could be paraphrased as follows: "I will not have another Canadian soldier die going out doing useless benchmarks and shuttling you guys around and fighting for areas without doing KALAY. I will not allow this to continue to happen."[184]

TF Kandahar staff rebuilt bridges with the Other Government Department representatives and looked for ways to support KANTOLO. There was continued resistance:

> [BGen Vance] would say "This needs to happen in order to ensure our soldiers stop dying." And people didn't want to buy into it because that somehow would take away the limelight, the importance, the focus of the money that's being spent on benchmarks and signature projects. You don't want the military to take the lead. You don't want the military to be successful.[185]

Yet more opposition emerged from a new direction:

> It's one thing to force CIDA at the PRT to participate in the tactical planning for the development line of operation Vance's headquarters … already had made up their mind that the civilians at the PRT would be point on the village plan, which was a ridiculous assumption because the civilians at the PRT didn't know what planning was, let alone the OPP process. The assumption was that CO PRT would direct civilians in contributing to the plan … [it failed in that] it assumed that the UN and the NGOs (and Afghan ministries for that matter, given that the village was not a priority for health coverage for the Director of Public Health) would naturally alight to TF Kandahar's KALAY.[186]

Therefore,

> When UNAMA suggested that the UN clusters get involved in KALAY, WHO, the UNHCR, OCHA and UNICEF heads of office for the south voiced complete disagreement at the UN meeting in participating in KALAY, mostly for the following reasons. 1). There were no humanitarian needs distinguishing that village from any other, and, since UN agencies and humanitarian NGOs work on humanitarian benefits, not stabilization/governance/COIN priorities, that was a non-starter. 2). It was perceived to be a direct breach of the blue UN and NGO neutrality to become involved in KALAY as a not-so-subtle way of building up Afghan government credibility.[187]

BGen Vance soon learned that the UN had developed their own Critical District Plan and were believed to be trying to co-opt ISAF into adopting it. KANTOLO was a rival Canadian plan, and therefore coexistence was impossible. It was the UN way or the highway.[188] On the Ottawa front, sources told TF Kandahar staff that elements there saw KANTOLO "as a new strategy" and worried that it would "detract from our six priorities."[189] The situation stalemated again.

The log jam finally broke in May, when David Mulroney was appointed Ambassador to China. BGen Vance noted that, "Mulroney left and we got rid of all of that churn and the Clerk of the Privy Council [Kevin Lynch] left and we got rid of more of the churn. And it was good."[190] The staff also noted that "It was really different. Things really started to steam ahead."[191] On 16 May KANTOLO was finally approved by the Chief of the Defence Staff. By that point there was trouble was brewing again in the other districts.

Dand District at Risk

Though it appeared as though Dand district was in the eye of the hurricane of violence swirling around Kandahar City, district leader Abdul Nazek and his police force were still subjected to terrorist violence and, without coalition forces stationed in Dand, it was up to them to absorb the hit and keep moving on the development activities that were progressing in the district. February was a particularly bloody month for Dand's police force, with 15 officers killed and three wounded in three attacks on police infrastructure. On another occasion, when American police mentors were ambushed with their Afghan counterparts, a passing OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopter took out the terrorists' car, killing four and wounding two. A particularly savage attack took place on 2 March, when a man posing as a local resident entered a checkpoint asking for help, and then drugged seven police officers as they had tea together. An insurgent team then came in, bound and murdered the policemen, and stole their weapons.[192]

Photo Credit: Author

A key player in the fight was district leader Abdul Nazek, here seen with the author in January 2008. Nazek was an able and respected leader who understood the fine balance between economic, secular and religious dynamics in his district.

There was even a feud between entities in Nakhonay and Dand, but how much was due to insurgent action was open to question. When a team from Nakhonay kidnapped a village elder from Ruhabad, an armed team from Ruhabad infiltrated Nakhonay and took 24 Nakhonaians back to their village under some duress. District Leader Nazek facilitated an exchange of hostages.[193]

Nazek himself was nearly assassinated on 19 March when he heard his brother was under attack and responded. The bomb narrowly missed him. The Dand police continued to hold things together, and CIMIC continued to work closely with the Dand District Development Assembly, whose members refused to be intimidated and went about their work. The intimidation stepped up. A woman was found murdered and stuffed into a bag with a note attached: "Every person who works as a spy for ANSF and CF will be like this."[194]

Photo Credit: DND IS2009-1025-10r

The Dand District Centre became a point of main effort for Canadian and Afghan forces and a potent symbol as they fought to maintain control of the district. Attacked by a suicide bomber, the building was rebuilt and enhanced.

Finally, at 1130 hours on 30 March, a suicide bomber blew himself up on the second floor of the Dand District Centre, killing eight people, wounding five more, and severely compromising the structure. The target was the district shura meeting with CIMIC. This was no feud, but a major attack on the district leadership and people who were not the slightest bit interested in the Taliban or their ideology. In his conversations with the CIMIC team, Abdul Nazek was very clear that he understood what was going on and what to do about it:

> [Nazek] expressed his feelings that security will improve if they take care of their neighbours … if you take care of the people around you, they will protect you. [Nazek] feels very strongly on this issue … President Hamid Karzai asked the Dand district leader why he felt he was being targeted so much. [Nazek] could not explain but felt it may be due to his age and political views … Contractors are using their cousins and other relatives, and are filling their pockets with money. [Nazek] stressed that you have to win the people … that local national concerns are not being heard or focused on within KAF; [he] recommended that they should hire more people from Dand and Daman areas to instill confidence in ISAF.[195]

Fundamentally, Canadian analysis was that "the insurgents are attempting to expand their influence in Dand and are employing tactics similar to those in Arghandab."[196]

Maywand District Operations, April–May 2009

2-2 Infantry wound down operations in April and May in preparation for their relief in place by the 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment of the U.S. Army (1-12 Infantry). The draw-down coincided with the poppy harvest, which in turn reduced hostile activity in the district. CIMIC and USAID used this time to range out and continue to find projects to support and villages to assess. There was, for example, only one school out of sixteen operating in the district and it was, not surprisingly, in Hutal. There had been 20 teachers in the past but now there were only two. In a positive development, two Afghan contractors expressed interest in projects in the district. One of them, who had not been able to work in Maywand for 18 months, told the CIMIC team that Maywand "is more secure than last year."[197] In an inexplicable move, the bulk of the Maywand police were suddenly fired by the Kandahar police chief and replaced. This forced the Police Mentoring Team to start over with a whole new slate.

Overt enemy activity was limited to the area around Combat Outpost Terminator. A series of five IED attacks (which resulted in no deaths) and sporadic direct fire was assessed as an attempt to keep the American infantry company fixed inside its tactical infrastructure while the enemy moved around it. Patrols continued to sortie from Terminator nonetheless. After one IED strike, UAVs and OH-58D's tracked the bombers back to a compound, where a pursing patrol raided the facility and found IED making equipment.[198] A pair of SOF operations netted enemy leaders who were passing through the district.

As long as the insurgents were either unwilling or unable to engage coalition forces in Maywand seriously, the district's main problem was governance. Governor Wesa had ordered District Leader Haji Massoud to mount poppy-eradication operations, but Massoud resisted, arguing that, "if poppy eradication policy is applied, the [Afghan National Police] will not be able to ensure security in Maywand."[199] In a matter of days, President Karzai had

replaced Massoud with Obaidullah Bawari. Governor Wesa was informed later. Massoud was incensed and claimed that his replacement was a Noorzai connected to Ahmad Wali Karzai, whom he blamed for his removal, not Wesa.[200] When Obaidullah arrived in Hutal to take charge, he was greeted by a crowd of supporters; clearly, Maywand Noorzais who were aligned with the Popalzai power structure had cause to celebrate. Obaidullah did not initiate eradication operations either.

The subtext of this interfactional "dialogue" was that competing groups of narcotics producers wanted access to Maywand's crops and transit routes. Whoever held the district leader position could selectively eradicate poppy to favour his patron(s) at the expense of their competitors, and still look good to the "internationals" handling the counter-narcotics agenda in Afghanistan. As we have seen in earlier chapters, control over the district police was a key factor in this dialogue. ISAF forces were caught in the middle of this dynamic while trying to kill Taliban and implement reconstruction and development programming. Maywand, with its pro-Taliban Noorzai population, was now in the Popalzai power structure's camp. That did not necessarily mean it was in the Government's camp.

Operations in Zharey District, April–May 2009

Reporting from Zharey in April indicated that there was little or no overall progress in the district. CIMIC teams confirmed what their predecessors had written in nearly identical reports: "[source] mentioned he doesn't trust the Zharey district shura members, mentioning that they are all corrupt and that their representatives can't understand the situation in the area because they never come down to the villages … [source] reported that the shura member sold the seeds in the bazaar instead of giving them to the population."[201] The district police chief, Bismillah Khan, told Canadian police mentors, "the Taliban have influence everywhere including the district shura, mentioning that [source], a Zharey district shura member, is linked with his brother to the Taliban."[202] There was only one operational government-affiliated clinic in the district. As for the Canadian-supported polio vaccination campaign, "the persons in charge are coming from Kandahar City [and not from the district] and were not coming into Zharey District." District Leader Sahardi also told the Canadians that he expected less than 20 percent of the population to turn out for the elections.[203]

What was starting to work, however, was the Joint District Coordination Centre, its 911-type emergency telephone system and, to a certain extent, the police. There were local people who understood the system, particularly in Asheque and Senjaray, and were using it to report enemy activities and even make suggestions on infrastructure projects.[204] Callers reported the presence of insurgents from Waziristan in the area.[205] Police even initiated contact in Senjaray without help from mentors; they reported that a local man who

had lost a brother to the Taliban "went into a rage and attacked the insurgents, helping the Afghan police kill three insurgents." One of the dead was a local Taliban sub-commander.[206] The Afghan army personnel at the Joint District Coordination Centre started to receive calls from informants who had previously made contact with Afghan army patrols in the district.[207] Unfortunately, almost all these positive developments remained limited to Asheque and Senjaray, and did not spread to the rest of Zharey District.

The security force laydown meant that most of the district was not patrolled and lacked an enduring security presence. Half of the existing tactical infrastructure in Zharey was on Highway 1 to keep it patrolled and open to east-west commercial and military traffic, with a significant proportion of police tactical infrastructure dedicated to keeping Route Summit open. Previous problems in Senjaray and Asheque ensured a significant Afghan presence there; 1st Kandak deployed two of its four companies in the area, along with their Canadian mentors.

In terms of enemy activity, Canadian ISTAR resources determined that the enemy main effort in the district was Asheque and Senjaray, and that the insurgent leadership even wanted to build an operations centre in Senjaray to support its urban terrorist operations in Kandahar City. About ten ambushes were recorded in April and May. Taliban fighters attacked USPI convoys on Highway 1, but the days of massive IEDs on the road were over for the time being. There was practically no visibility on what was going on in the Sangsar-Nahlgam-Sia Choy 'heart of darkness' as ISTAR resources were focused elsewhere. The insurgents maintained their pattern of moving supplies into western Zharey through Band-e Timor, building up and consolidating in central Zharey, and then proceeding to forward operating locations in eastern Zharey. The difference was increased activity in Senjaray, which was likely supported and supplied from the enemy's Zharey district system as well as the Arghandab system which was in turn supported from Khakrez and Shah Wali Kot. New enemy leaders were also starting to come in to Zharey.[208]

In April, N Company 3 RCR prepared to hand off to B Company 2 R22eR, but operations were necessary to keep the insurgency off balance. N Company's last operation was SANGA TSUNAMI conducted on 9-10 April (see Figure 5-9 and Figure 5-9a). This operation was a probe south of Highway 1 near Kolk that essentially was a manoeuvre-to-collect mission. Moving south, N Company and American police mentors moved south and encountered an enemy warning system that fired small arms and RPGs at them while an IED took out a police mentor vehicle. The entire enemy command system down to Sia Choy unmasked itself for the benefit of the ISTAR systems, including some of the new leaders coming into the district.[209]

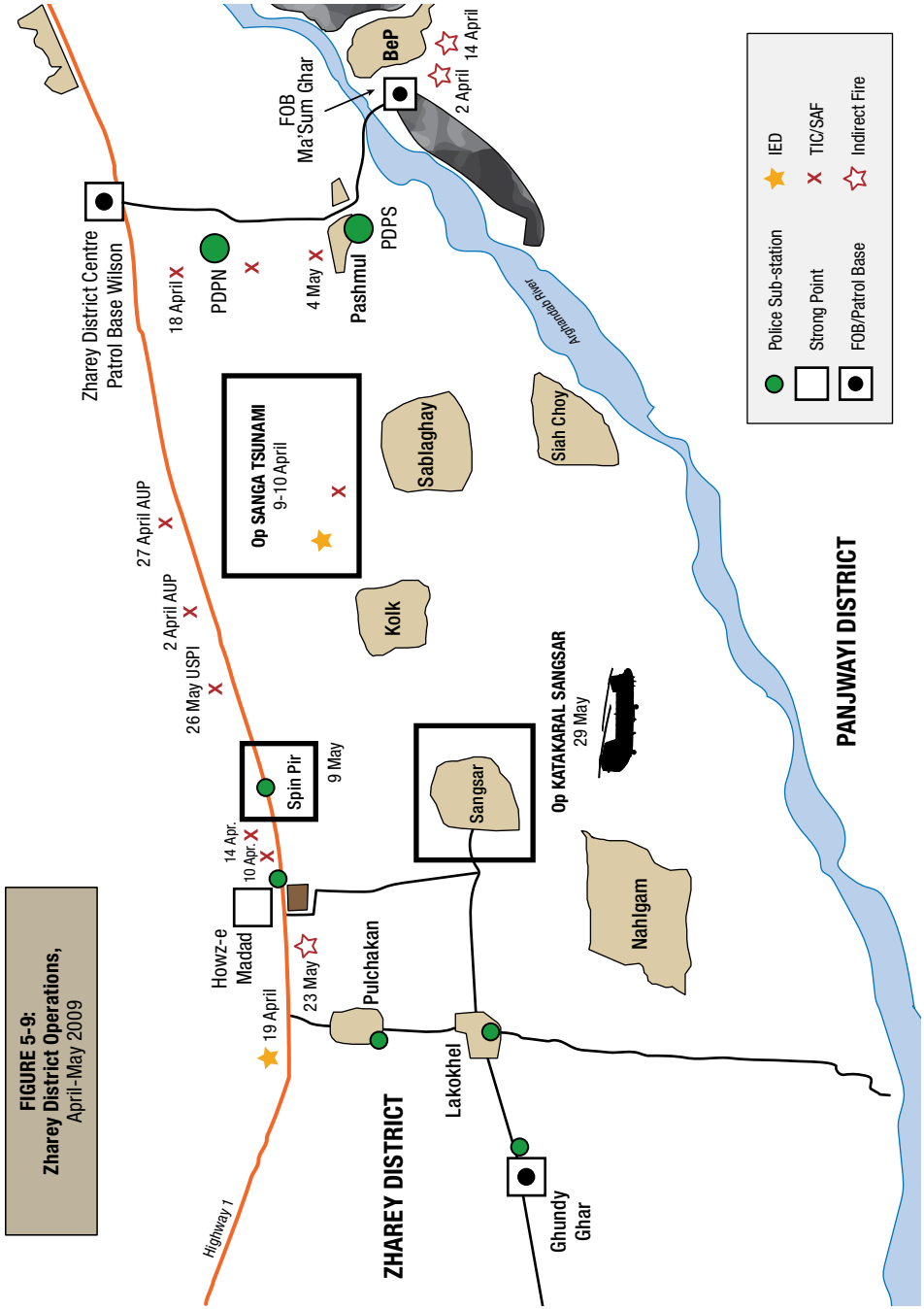

Figure 5-9: Zharey District Operations, April-May 2009

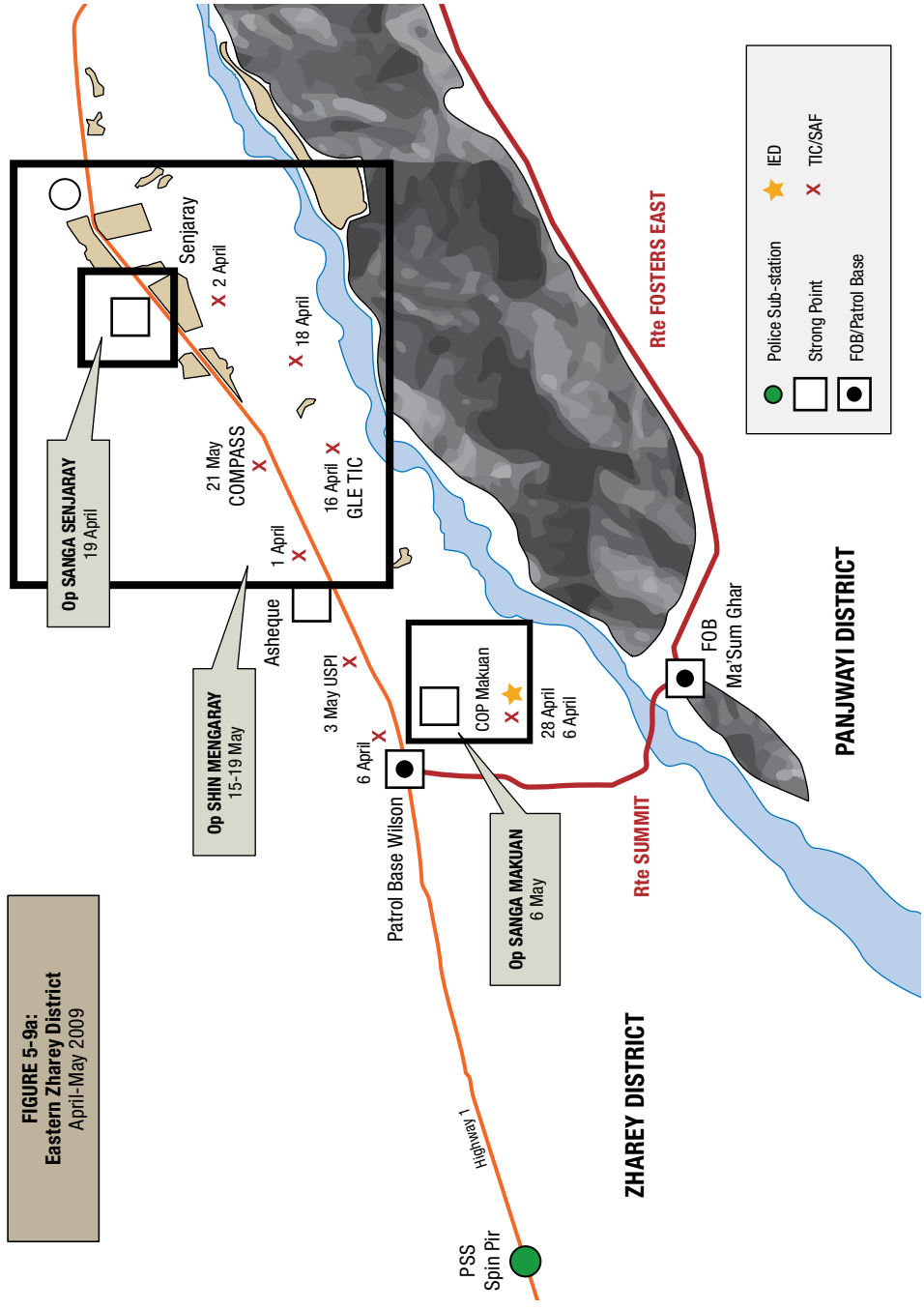

Figure 5-9a: Eastern Zharey District, April-May 2009

Over in Senjaray, Canadian intelligence ascertained that the enemy was increasing their forces with four groups of about 65 fighters total. On 19 April, LCol Paul launched B Company into the area to work with the local Afghan forces in Operation SANGA SENJARAY. It was designed not only to disrupt hostile movement in southern Senjaray and to scoop up caches of weapons and IED materials: it was also a manoeuvre-to-collect. B Company and engineers from 51e Escadron linked up with the Afghan infantry company based at Strong Point Senjaray and their Canadian mentor team, and commenced clearing compounds of interest. Small quantities of IED materials were found, and several dehydration casualties were evacuated from B Company.[210]

Operation SANGA SENJARAY had an intriguing effect on the people of Senjaray. The next day, 40 community leaders told the district security shura that they "have resolved to move against the insurgents in their town." District Leader Sahardi told the Canadian CIMIC teams that the local people "will take it upon themselves to force the insurgents out of the town" but, in his view, "an enhanced ANSF and/or CF presence would be required in order to ensure that insurgent influence and presence in the area did not return."[211] The insurgents responded to this temerity with a complex ambush of an ANA patrol that left two Afghan soldiers dead and seriously wounded one Canadian and four other Afghans.[212]

The Canadians and Afghans intensified their patrolling in Senjaray, but their efforts produced only small, ineffectual contacts. On 6 May, B Company and the Afghan force in Makuan cooperated in Operation SANGA MAKUAN but turned up nothing. Insurgents moved south and shot up both the Pashmul North and Pashmul South police sub-stations along Route Summit from positions to the east.

The insurgents increasingly interdicted district cell phone communications to interfere with locals who were passing information to the Joint District Coordination Centre. This was of serious concern, given that this '911' system was now bearing fruit. The National Directorate of Security commander, unfortunately, lost contact with all of his sources overnight.A project to build a tower outside FOB Wilson was supposedly under way, but no one seemed to know anything about it except that CIDA might be involved. Meanwhile, all three of the district's cellphone service providers suspended operations.[213]

Labour problems at the Pashmul South police sub-station left authorities in Kandahar City throwing up their hands in frustration at the prospect of dealing with the Zharey police in any area that was not Senjaray. The reallocation of the Canadian P-OMLT to support operations in Kandahar City meant that there were fewer police mentors for Zharey District. The American police mentors were still sorting out what their level of involvement in the district would be. Consequently, a decision was made to close the police sub-stations at Spin Pir and Pashmul South and withdraw the Canadian mentors. In Operation MIKIERANDAL 2, Canadian engineers removed the facilities so the insurgents could not use them.[214]

These developments alarmed District Leader Sahardi:

> The DL commented on the situation of ISAF being seen by local nationals and insurgents as withdrawing from Zharey and Panjwayi. Shura members made direct reference to Mushan, Spin Pir, and Pashmul South patrol bases and police sub-stations and stated that local nationals view these as indicators that the insurgents have forced ISAF from these areas. Also there were numerous pleas from shura members for development projects in their sub-districts.[215]

Zharey District west of Senjaray was now part of the Disrupt zone. Without the forces required to clear and hold it, and with the priority now on Kandahar City and its approaches, TF Kandahar wrote off most of Zharey District. The Canadian planners focused on reinforcing success in Senjaray and launched random disrupt operations just south of Highway 1 to keep insurgents in the Sangsar-Kolk area away from the road.

In mid- May, TF Kandahar decided to go back into Senjaray with Operation SHIN MENGARAY. What was sauce for the goose was sauce for the gander, so 2-2 Infantry deployed on Operation BOBCAT to get insurgents in Maywand District to activate their communications system so their radio repeaters in the hills north of Highway 1 — designated Objective PLAGUE — could be spotted and destroyed before the main body launched into Zharey. Objective PLAGUE was temporarily denied after repeated artillery and air strikes at 0300 hours on 16 May and, at 0800 hours, C Company 2 R22eR moved into southern Senjaray. At the same time, Recce Platoon and C Squadron moved to blocking positions south of the Arghandab River. Company D from 2-2 Infantry blocked from the west, Company B cleared Highway 1 with engineers, and Recce Squadron moved into a block in the northeast. 1st Kandak, 4th Kandak and their Canadian mentors moved to Strong Point Senjaray preparing to move into the cordoned area when several of their interpreters suddenly quit, claiming that the Americans paid more and they were going to the highest bidder. This action unexpectedly stalled that part of the operation.

The enemy immediately went to ground and cached their weapons. Wearing civilian clothes, many of them escaped to the west down wadi systems and along the river — unarmed, they could not be targeted by air assets or artillery. IED material and an 82-mm recoilless rifle were found, and the Afghans detained 30 suspected insurgents. One insurgent produced an AK-47 from under his clothing and engaged Canadian troops, but was cut down before he could generate casualties. In another incident, an IED wounded members of an American patrol, but there was no further contact.[216]

The next day, the radio repeaters at Objective PLAGUE were up and running again. A ScanEagle SUAV deployed to the area so that M-777 artillery fire could be brought down on the sites. While Company B was withdrawing, they encountered multiple

IEDs and requested airmobile extraction. CH-47s lifted them back to FOB Wilson while the blocking units progressively fell back on their bases. TF Kandahar deemed that Operation SHIN MENGARAY achieved a disruptive effect on the insurgents in Senjaray.

B Company 2 R22eR conducted Operation KATAKAWAL SANGSAR, an airmobile insertion with Canadian helicopters into the Sangsar area that was designed to disrupt the insurgent network targeting Highway 1. After getting into a two-hour firefight on 29 May, B Company conducted a ground withdrawal, first to Strong Point Lakokhel and then to FOB Wilson.[217]

Panjwayi District Operations, April–May 2009

In Panjwayi, Haji Baran continued on as District Leader, but the bi-weekly district shura remained sparsely attended with little or no activity being conducted by the District Development Assembly. The incoming CIMIC team met with Baran and asked him for a prioritized list of projects that he wanted to see done. Baran had been told by Afghan government personnel that a lawyer, a prosecutor, and a judge were going to be assigned to Panjwayi, and therefore needed office equipment. He wanted a secure storage site for wheat distribution. He also wanted a large mosque established close to the New District Centre. And he wanted a playground.[218] This was, he explained, supposed to be surrounded by a whole new city to be built west of Bazaar-e Panjwayi and called Dastagiri. The CIMIC operators were not quite sure how to respond to these grandiose requests. Baran played to Canadian proclivities and arranged a women's focus group to satisfy them, but the CIMIC team learned that "the women had been selected by district leader Haji Baran….it is believed that they are relatives or relatives of close personal friends of Baran."[219]

Baran continued to complain about the Route Fosters Paving Project. Workers were still getting blown up and progress was slow, and the Canadians became convinced that Baran was somehow, paradoxically, undermining it. In early May, the Construction Management Organization ceased work on the road and turned it over to the only company that bid on it: Bennett-Fouch Associates.[220] Weeks later, when CIMIC and the Construction Management Office checked in with Bennet-Fouch, nothing had been done on Route Fosters and the contractor reported that Baran had ordered them to stop work.[221]

On the policing front, manning problems continued. Mentors learned that 50 police officers assigned to Panjwayi District lived in Kandahar City and refused to work in Panjwayi because it was "too dangerous".[222] The US police mentoring team assessment was that the Tajik cops were reliable but the Pashtun ones were not and agreed that "the AUP in Bazaar-e Panjwayi are generally more professional than in some other districts."[223] The chief of police successfully convinced the Canadian and American police mentors to hold a separate "sub-committee" of the Security Committee because he didn't trust Baran.

This 'sub committee' led to improved Afghan police-army interactions and delineations, especially regarding operations in Bazaar-e Panjwayi, which had been a point of contention in the past.[224] In any event, the police were good enough to identify a team of fake Afghan police operating in Panjwayi.[225] Ultimately however the chief of police was frustrated and ready to quit:

> He has complained on many occasions that he is willing and wants to conduct operations. However, he feels he is not getting the support he needed. He is constantly short of personnel and he has lost over 20 of his men [in action] since his arrival in the area. He is not seeing progress and therefore sees no reason to remain in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and wants to be in an area where he can effect change … The departure of the chief of police could have a significant effect in the improved effectiveness of the AUP that has been since the arrival of the current district chief of police and an impact on the relative stability that has been achieved in Bazaar-e Panjwayi.[226]

Summoned to Kabul, he met with the Minister of Justice who provided him with a letter of response to the issues surrounding police support in the districts. On return he read this out to the Panjwayi police. The police mentors noted that "This letter seems to answer all of the complaints aimed at the [police]….This is fantastic progress as long as those measures are applied. Knowing the district Chief of Police these will be stringently enforced….these will also improve relations with both the local nationals and the ANSF."[227]

And despite his imminent dismissal for being too honest, Col Faiz continued to provide the Joint District Coordination Centre significant and detailed information on enemy activities. For example, the enemy was consolidating in Zangabad with seven different groups, one of which was completely Arab and who were mentoring a seven-man team of teenagers. There were insurgent checkpoints all around Zangabad. Another new node was Chowlghor, where a force of some 60 foreign fighters was quartered along with their civilian-pattern vehicles. Faiz's sources also informed him that a large meeting in Quetta chaired by Mullah Baradar instructed their deployed forces to mount a large attack on some piece of ISAF infrastructure and overrun it for propaganda effect.[228] The insurgents, in fact, were holding shuras in Chalghowr and had set themselves up as a parallel power with twenty local fighters residing there.[229]

The Joint District Coordination Centre continued to receive a regular flow of information from local people on enemy movements in areas of the district that the insurgents did not control. Afghan police detachments working with American police mentors found several significant caches south and southeast of Bazaar-e Panjwayi, undermining the insurgents' operational capabilities. One of these caches, which included a set of bloodied doctor's cloths, was in a Bazaar-e Panjwayi mosque. The suspected insurgent was a mullah who was from the community.[230]

In April and May 2009, Canadian and Afghan security operations centered on three areas: Mushan, Sperwan, and the communities south of Route Fosters East, which had been recently renamed Route Hyena. A rise in reports of insurgent movements into Chalghowr, Salavat, Nakhonay and Khenjakak, and their relationship to continuing operations in Dand and Kandahar City, forced the battle group commanders (who were conducting the relief in place) to revise priorities. CIMIC surveyed the situation around Salavat to gain an impression from the population of what was going on, but got conflicting information: the police from the Salehan Police Sub-Station were ripping people off, but others were happy with the Salehan police. Nobody wanted to talk about insurgents.

On 4 April, M Company and the tank squadron conducted Operation ARGHANWANI PIL II. While the police patrolled Route Hyena and the tanks moved into a supporting position, a single RPG was launched at them without result and later on a police vehicle struck an IED that wounded two men. There was no organized resistance but progress was slow because of the IED threat on Route Lake Effect. ISTAR coverage gleaned more data on hostile activities in eastern Panjwayi, but the enemy did not react to the combat team's movements[231]. (see Figure 5-10 and Figure 5-10a)

The action then shifted to Mushan, where an infantry company from 3rd Kandak and their Canadian mentors had been aggressively patrolling to keep the insurgency off balance. The insurgents generally kept to the area west of Mushan and east of Talukan. Pushing out east on 7 April, the Afghans and Canadians made contact with a surprised group of insurgents and found themselves in a running gunfight. As the patrol pulled back, the newly deployed Batterie X at PB Sperwan Ghar conducted their first M-777 fire mission to cover them, and OH-58D Kiowa Warriors conducted gun runs on identifiable insurgents.[232] The next day, the Afghan infantry and their mentors pushed east again just to see what would happen. They bumped a patrol of insurgents and called in close air support from a pair of U.S. Marine Corps F-18s. As the M-777 battery prepared to engage, the enemy dispersed. On their way back to the strong point, the patrol took fire from two insurgents who fled when heavy fire came back at them.[233] Probing an aggravated chancre sore, the Afghan infantry from Mushan returned to Talukan, but they were forced back to Mushan when a soldier was wounded. The Canadian mentors in Mushan concluded that they had bumped into an IED factory and a staging area north of Talukan.[234]

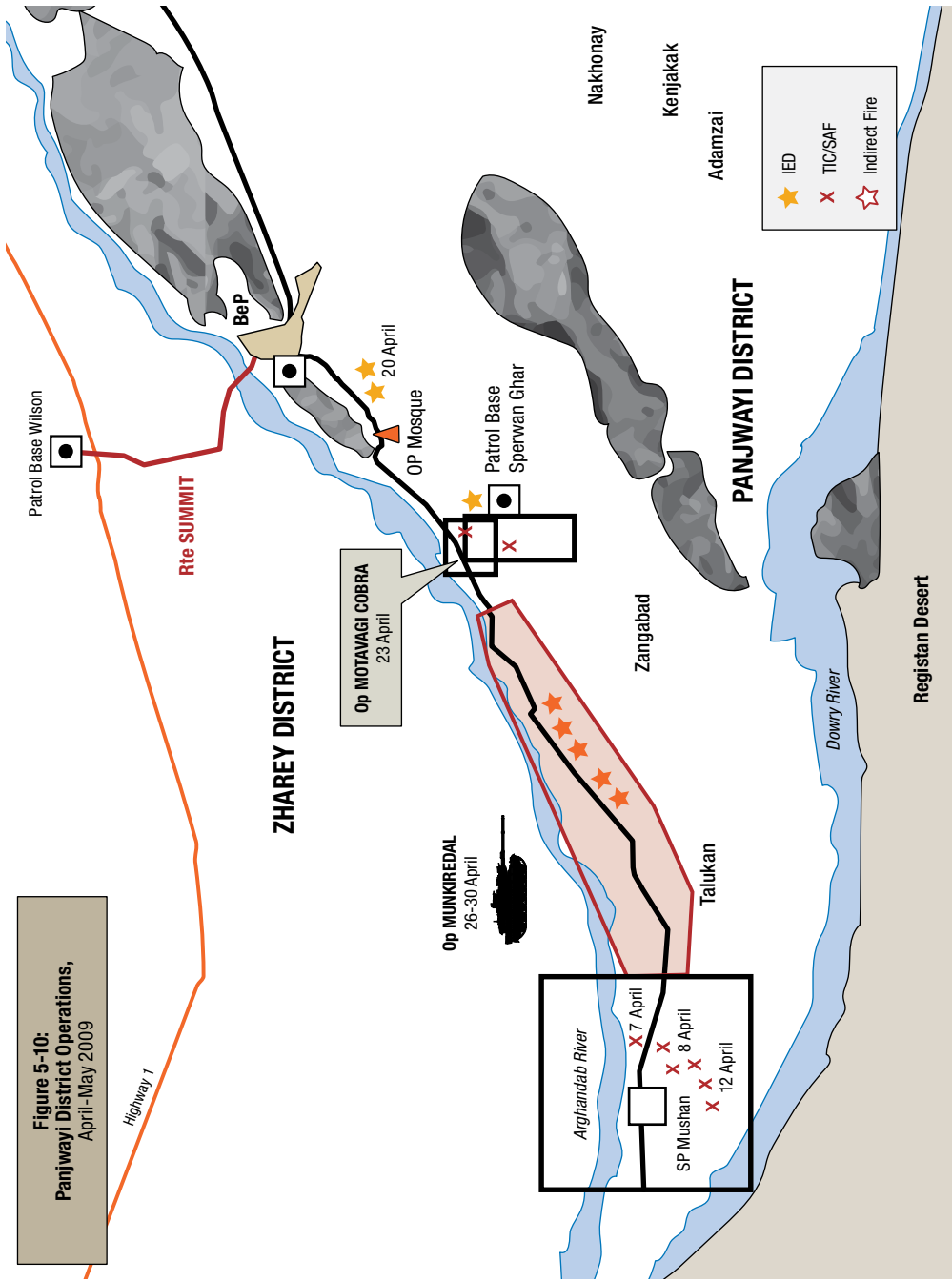

Figure 5-10: Panjwayi District Operations, April-May 2009

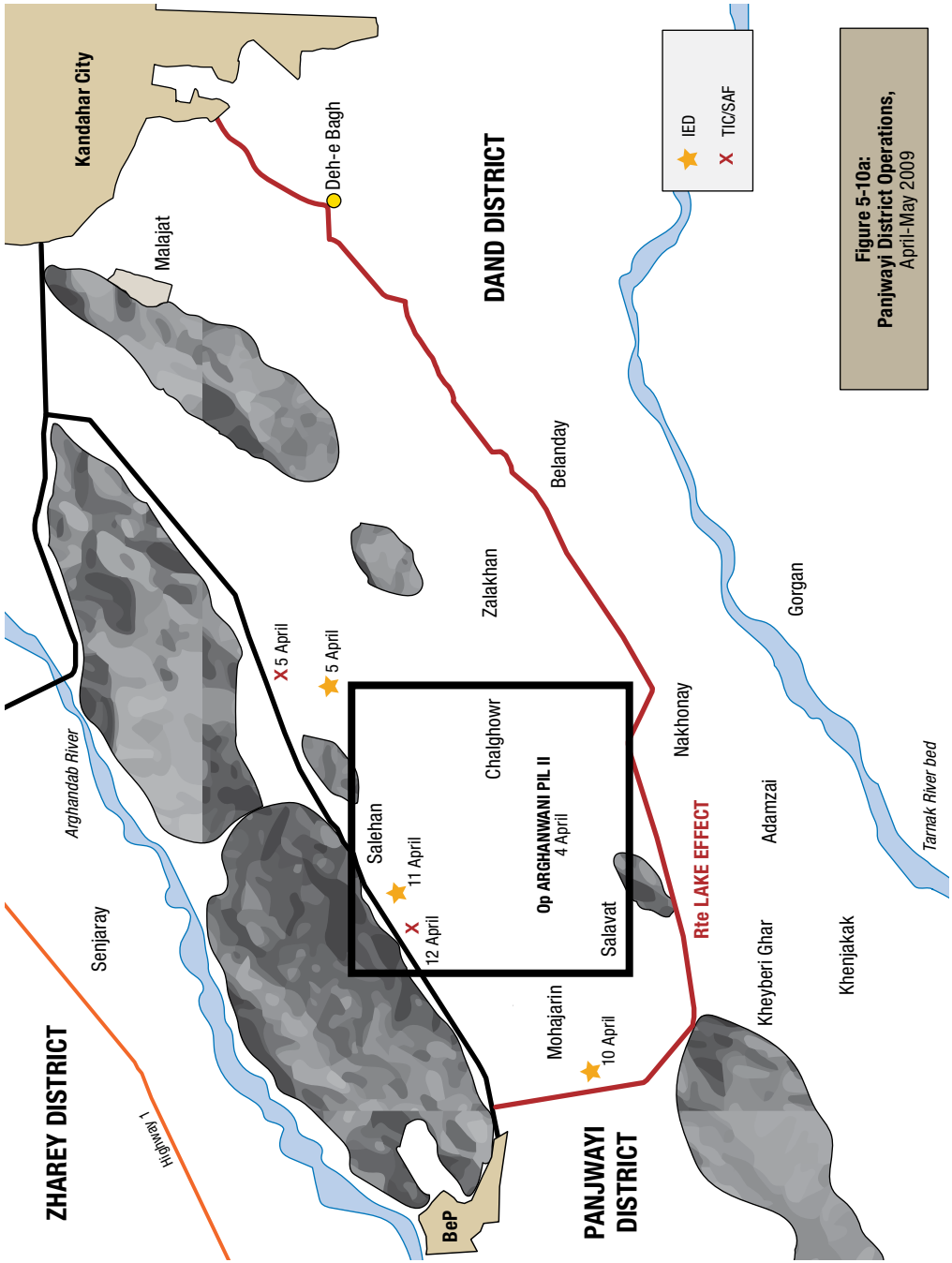

Figure 5-10a: Eastern Panjwayi District Operations, April-May 2009

Photo Credit: Courtesy of C Squadron LdSH, TF 1-09

This picture, which was taken near Talukan in the Horn of Panjwayi, shows the constrained terrain along Route Fosters that increased the vulnerability of resupply convoys.

BGen Vance's decision to contract from western Zharey and Panjwayi in order to focus on the Kandahar City approaches and a reorientation of Afghan army kandaks in 1-205 Brigade led to Operation MUNKIR EDAL at the end of April. Simply put, this operation was the tear down of Strong Point Mushan. This was not an easy decision to implement, especially since some of the troops in the battle group had operated from there back in 2007 and a lot of Canadian blood had been spilt on Route FOSTERS. It became a "major leadership issue" for LCol Paul, who had to carry the operation out but in the end it was done.[235]

For the most part, Operation MUNKIR EDAL was a larger version of operations that had been conducted on Route Fosters West (now Route Hyena) since 2007. In this case, a compound of interest assessed as a command and control node was targeted first with a GBU-38 bomb strike (similar to Operation TIMUS PREEM in August 2008), followed by a feint by the Leopard tank squadron south of Sperwan Ghar, followed by an EROC-led thrust straight down Route Hyena to Mushan. Not surprisingly, "Progress was slow for B and C Companies … there were several minor UXO/IED finds that hampered progress … lead elements (tanks with rollers) struck an IED … mobility problems slowed the operation's progress. This was due to the width of the road." The move of about 20 kilometers took 28 hours — remarkably like similar previous operations.

The teardown went ahead while two companies from 2-2 Infantry patrolled Route Hyena West to ensure there was no IED placement by the insurgents. Because the Arghandab River was running high, the force returned to Sperwan Ghar on Route Hyena West, suffering five IED strikes on the way; one hit a Leopard tank and wounded two crew members. There was no other enemy contact as "reporting indicated that the insurgents were still confused about the true purpose of Operation MUNKIREDAL, with some insurgents thinking that ISAF was coming to eradicate poppies, while others thought ANSF/CF were expanding Strong Point Mushan or building a new base."[236] The force returned to its bases on 30 April. There was now no Afghan or Canadian presence west of the 28 easting and the Horn of Panjwayi was now completely in the hands of the insurgency.[237]

Photo Credit: DND AR2009-Z051-01

When Strong Point Mushan was deemed to have outlived its usefulness, the 2 R22eR Battle Group conducted Operation MUNKREDAL to tear it down and redeploy the Afghan infantry company and Canadian mentors based there.

As a result, C Company launched Operation KATAKAWAL STRIKE west of Sperwan Ghar in the direction of Zangabad to a depth of two kilometers in order to generate intelligence for "future strikes". The operation confirmed that the population was firmly on the fence because of the Taliban presence. The operation also generated significant enemy communications activity and determined that insurgents had freedom of movement west of the 28 Easting.

Maj Jourdain believed that a combination of patrolling and observation posts west of Sperwan Ghar was the best course of action to take to reduce enemy freedom of movement and generate stand off from the base.[238] This plan led to an aggressive patrolling schedule. In the context of this plan, MCpl Simon Frigon was awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions. Frigon led two fighting withdrawals on two separate patrols after his section was ambushed and nearly trapped by enemy forces on 7 and 20 May. On 21 May, a platoon from C Company probed the enemy early-warning system, killing two fighters, but the insurgents anticipated the platoon's movements and poured fire on them each time they repositioned, wounding three soldiers. Artillery was called in while LAV IIIs moved to extract.[239] In a similar encounter on 26 May, insurgents on motorcycles with RPGs and mortars in support hit an eight-man patrol from two locations. As the soldiers called in M-777 fire from Sperwan Ghar, they noticed that the enemy forces moved on parallel routes in order to cut them off. They made it back to safety with only one man wounded. The more patrols C Company sent out, however, the more inclined the locals were to provide information on enemy activities.[240]

And so it continued, with a line drawn on the map at the 28 Easting.

Operations in Arghandab and Lower Shah Wali Kot Districts, April–May 2009

The dominant theme throughout April and May in Arghandab District was the steady loss of governance. Haji Karimullah Naqibi, the leader of the Alikozai, remained obstinate and uncooperative with the provincial government and particularly with the Afghan National Army and TF Kandahar. It was now more than eight months since the Afghan army planned to establish a strong point in the town of Jelawur, and Karimullah was blocking its construction because it was supposed to be built on his land.[241] It was well known throughout Arghandab that the insurgents were strengthening their hold on the people of Jelawur but, with no tactical infrastructure in the village, it was almost impossible to project governance there.[242] The insurgents were bold enough to conduct a shura in a village near the Arghandab District Centre in mid-April, but "TFK was unable to push sufficient force dispositions into the green belt to interdict these insurgents." The OCC-P "was contacted to get the Afghan National Army involved; however, they did not deploy."[243] When the Canadians went to Governor Wesa, "it was pointed out that the current situation could not be fixed with kinetic operations alone. More police presence through checkpoints and patrolling was required to generate ground-level intelligence while disrupting insurgent freedom of movement."[244] The governor said he would discuss the issue with Matiullah Qati Khan, the Provincial Chief of Police. He eventually held a shura with some Arghandab elders, but it proved unproductive.[245]

On the plus side, the two Taliban specialists who commanded the Arghandab IED network and were deemed responsible for many of the strikes against Recce Squadron were killed by "Regional Command (South) elements" on the night of 4 April.[246] Over the next two months, Canadian forces suffered only four IED strikes. Only one of these resulted in Canadian casualties: on 13 April, while Maj Dean Tremblay and Maj Jean-François Cauden were conducting the Recce Squadron handover, Tpr Karine Blais of 12e Régiment blindé du Canada was killed and four others were wounded in an IED strike on their Coyote.

Cauden and his troopers understood from the outset that their task in lower Shah Wali Kot and Arghandab constituted economy of effort. They had no illusions. Vance spoke with Cauden directly and limited the squadron's tasks to keeping access to the Tarin Kot road open, to disrupt the enemy when possible, and do what could be done locally to keep the population on the government side in preparations for the August election. It was clear from the outset that there were incoming forces to conduct a relief in place but not when this would happen.[247] LCol Paul noted that "Recce Squadron was all over the district. It was extremely difficult and the squadron had a light footprint on the ground. So I told my boys to do their best to avoid casualties. Do the right engagement, because I knew that the American forces were going to arrive. You have to have a main effort at some point. The main effort was Deh-e Bagh.[248]

The staff at TF Kandahar concluded that the enemy had achieved:

> … some success and will continue until networks operating in this area are the focus of a sustained targeting campaign. Although it is assessed that some networks in the [Shah Wali Kot-Arghandab] border area are local, many Taliban also stage out of or receive support from Khakrez and other areas of Shah Wali Kot to conduct operations in this region.[249]

That is, Regional Command (South) was technically responsible for these areas and should have been using its own battle group or special operations forces to mount effective disrupt operations. (As seen in previous chapters, the combination of an American special operations task force and the Regional Command Battle Group was effective at generating disruption.) That said, those forces were no longer consistently employed in upper Ghorak, Khakrez or upper Shah Wali Kot, and so the Canadians and Afghans in Arghandab and lower Shah Wali Kot were on the receiving end of renewed enemy activity.

Indeed, when ISTAR resources were directed at the problem in mid-April, the assessment was that the insurgent network in Arghandab District had so many cells in it that they had to identify areas of operations to prevent "red on red" incidents. There was now even a Taliban district shadow governor in the area and reports came in that the insurgents were preparing an assassination campaign against the elders, shura members, and police.[250]

On the government side, Arghandab had not seen a CIMIC patrol in nearly a month, although resources were made available for a secure VIP tour of the Dahla Dam.[251] When CIMIC operators did meet with the district leader, he glowingly told the team that all the schools were open, the teachers were teaching, and children of both genders were attending. Discussions with the District Development Assembly indicated that the government only controlled, and could push projects to, the three villages that were in the vicinity of the Arghandab District Centre.[252] Meanwhile, the infamous Jabar Agha was seen all over the district, organizing and proselytizing in Jelawur, Mansurabad, Salam Kalachah and Khvajehmolk.[253]

On 19 May, Arghandab's long-suffering District Chief of Police, Zmaray Khan, was severely wounded by a suicide IED attack on his headquarters that also killed several of his closest officers. He was taken to hospital in an Mi-17 helicopter flown by the Afghan National Army Air Corps from KAF.[254] Immediately after the hit on the police, the enemy placed an IED near Jelawur in order to lure in a Canadian quick reaction force but their ambush was overmatched by the presence of a Leopard tank troop and a Canadian-mentored Afghan infantry company.

As his predecessors had in the past, Governor Wesa and his wife suddenly departed Kandahar, leaving the deteriorating situation in Arghandab to Provincial Chief of Police Matiullah Qati Khan, who told TF Kandahar that the people of Arghandab thought the government "does not have the ability to act" and that they needed a security presence immediately. Meanwhile, the ISTAR system received constant reports of planned and proposed enemy actions. When insurgents destroyed the cellphone towers, Matiullah Qati led a police force with American mentors into western Arghandab. The force was hit with IEDs and ambushed, but the chief led two groups of police in pursuit, killing one insurgent. A responding Canadian recce patrol also hit an IED, taking no casualties. It was the end of May, and Arghandab was on the brink again.

Kandahar City Operations, April–May 2009

Kandahar City endured an urban terrorist assault throughout April. On April Fool's Day, an attack on the Provincial Shura Building by four suicide bombers dressed as Afghan soldiers resulted in 17 wounded and seven dead, including the Director of Education and the Deputy Director of Health. Shura members took up arms and defended themselves under the leadership of ex-*mujahid* Haji Agha Lalai Dastagiri. Then FOB Walton was hit with a single rocket, somebody threw a grenade at a police patrol, and USPI convoys on Highway 4 east of the city hit two IEDs, the first in months. That was just the first week.[255]

When a road contractor was kidnapped and a suicide bomber on a bicycle blew up the USPI headquarters building, the attacks could have been either commercial violence or insurgent action, but the IED that hit telecom workers heading to Zharey to repair the cellphone towers was probably laid by the Taliban to degrade security in that district indicating a link between insurgent operations in Zharey District and terrorism in Kandahar City[256]. Further confirmation came with the interception by ANP and National Directorate of Security officers of a suicide vehicle-borne IED on its way into the city from its construction point in Senjaray.[257]

On 13 April, four men gunned down Provincial Council member Sitara Achakzai as she left her home. This high-profile assassination received extensive media attention that magnified the belief that Kandahar Province was spinning out of control.[258] Only seven vendors showed up at the women's market, and those few told a CIMIC patrol that "they were afraid to participate due to the killing of a female shura member earlier in the week … they mentioned that they were afraid to travel within Kandahar City."[259]

And the violence did not stop. Another suicide bomber on a bicycle struck a police patrol outside Mirwais Hospital. The Governor's Palace was next. On the afternoon of 26 April three suicide bombers dressed as Afghan security force personnel got into the security zone and detonated, killing five people and rocking the provincial coordination centre. A CU-170 Heron UAV came on station and BGen Vance and LCol Turenne moved with their tactical headquarters to the palace in order to support Governor Wesa. Notably. "The site was effectively secured and jointly exploited with ANSF/CF. The combined efforts of the ANA and ANP quick-reaction forces demonstrated that significant progress has been made in the development of their soldiers and officers."[260]

The Governor and TF Kandahar initially worked through the Provincial Security Meeting and its Working Group to plan for more frequent foot patrols near schools and for increased control at five major Kandahar City access points. It was like the long-forgotten Operation PORTCULLIS had been resurrected. The first surge operation went down on 29 April and was designed to screen for unauthorized vehicle traffic and deter enemy infiltration on key routes. The plan was to man the five gates into the city with increased personnel. This was an Afghan police operation, coordinated by the provincial coordination centre and mentored by them.[261]

The next phase was a coordinated surge by the Afghan National Police, the Afghan National Army and the National Directorate of Security into key districts for cordon-and-search operations. It was planned by the new Kandahar City Joint Patrolling and Planning Meeting where the ANA, ANP and NDS were all represented, and Stab A attended to represent TF Kandahar. When Stab A visited the five entry-control points on the city boundary, however, they found nobody there.[262] It took another 48 hours before that

situation changed. LCol Turenne directed the PRT's Specialist Engineer Team to assist the police reinforce the five Entry Control Points. By this time, the ANA and the police agreed to mount joint patrols day and night. The Canadians noticed, however, that the NDS were not providing the detailed information required for intelligence-cued operations. Then the generals from Kabul arrived.

Taking over, they ordered a joint sweep of the entire city by the Afghan security forces to start on 3 May. Planning started on 2 May at a coordination centre hastily erected at the Old Corps Headquarters in the city. Three companies from 2nd Kandak and two companies from 3rd Kandak were brought in from Camp Hero and other positions in the districts. Canadian observers were extremely concerned: "Once they carried out a façade consultation, they briefed the governor of Kandahar in a generalized fashion and executed their plan in isolation." Operation TOLO ATTAL 26 was now on, with 500 Kandahar City police, regional police and border police working independently of each other and the NDS. Canadian CIMIC, P-OMLT, CIVPOL, and American police mentors all joined the effort.[263]

The entire force worked two districts at a time; District 9 and District 8 were the highest priorities, and District 9 was a known anti-government stronghold. District 4 and District 7 were next. Canadian forces were brought in to handle the screen around the city. Recce Squadron deployed patrols from Shah Wali Kot to positions northwest of District 9, while Canadian UAVs orbited the city.[264]

This massive effort produced a number of small caches and a three-man IED cell. Canadian analysts believed that the insurgents had moved their key personnel and caches out of the way before the searches went in. TOLO ATTAL 26 concluded on 10 May and was deemed a success from the perspective of joint interagency command and control.[265] When all was said and done, Stab A visited the five entry-control points five days later, and found they were neither effectively manned nor functioning.[266] CIMIC teams measuring the atmospherics noted, however, that "there are enduring positive effects" and that people reported feeling "more secure, principally because they knew the ANA and ANP were successful in finding ordnance and weapons."[267]

For the rest of May, high-profile terrorism dropped off but soft targets remained in vogue. Two drive-by shootings occurred and, in another case, two interpreters who worked for special operations forces were shot and wounded. Two suicide attacks and a radio-controlled IED strike against police targets resulted in 15 casualties: two dead and 13 wounded. Police at a vehicle checkpoint in District 9 found 193 antipersonnel mines being smuggled in an official Ford Ranger pick-up truck driven by police officers in uniform and carrying credentials.[268]

With all the violence and security activity in April and May, the PRT had trouble focussing on development. One depressing CIMIC report written after the team had talked with local people, including a judge, suggested that the Taliban were gaining ground in more than one crucial sector:

> The court judges think ISAF has been making empty promises to the justice departments for 6 years and that nothing has changed. This comment was directly aimed at CIMIC. This judge claims to have been in Kandahar City Court over the past six years. He claims that the Taliban can provide expedient and efficient justice which the local nationals can and do turn to since they do not believe in their current justice system. He feels that improving security in the Government Circle will only scare local nationals not to use the justice system and that Government Circle must remain an open place with little security … Questions towards local nationals focused on the upcoming federal elections. If the local nationals knew the elections were approaching, they were not familiar with the date or had no idea of who was actually running for president.[269]

Reorganizing for Operation KALAY

Dand District was the arena to test the Key Village Approach concept. PRT analysis, White Situational Awareness, and a variety of analytical tools led to the selection of Deh-e Bagh village as the focal point of the effort, called Operation KALAY.[270] Geographically, Deh-e Bagh consisted of three communities that sat on Route Lake Effect between western Panjwayi District and Kandahar City. A force controlling Deh-e Bagh could interdict routes into Malajat (and, from there, northwest to Sarposa Prison and Highway 1) and into District 6 of the city. Increased presence in Dand emanating from Deh-e Bagh and other communities might also have an effect on insurgent routes leading from Lake Effect over to rocket launch sites in Daman district targeting Kandahar Air Field (see Figure 5-11). Consequently, operations in Deh-e Bagh could have a direct impact on the security of Kandahar City, in accordance with KANTOLO planning.

The "human terrain" in the area consisted mostly of Barakzai clans, but also included a small village of Kutchie nomads. Overall, the population was assessed as pro-government, in contrast to the insurgent havens of Nakhonay, Khenjakak and Chalghowr. There were very few security incidents associated with Deh-e Bagh. The village was also across the road from the now heavily-damaged Dand district centre compound complex.[271]

As for governance, Dand was in the Sherzai camp and the Barakzais had been progressively marginalized by the Popalzai power structure, though not yet in the same way the Alikozais had been in Arghandab.[272] Propping up the Barakzais in Dand reassured them that the decapitation of Alikozai power in Arghandab by both insurgents and power

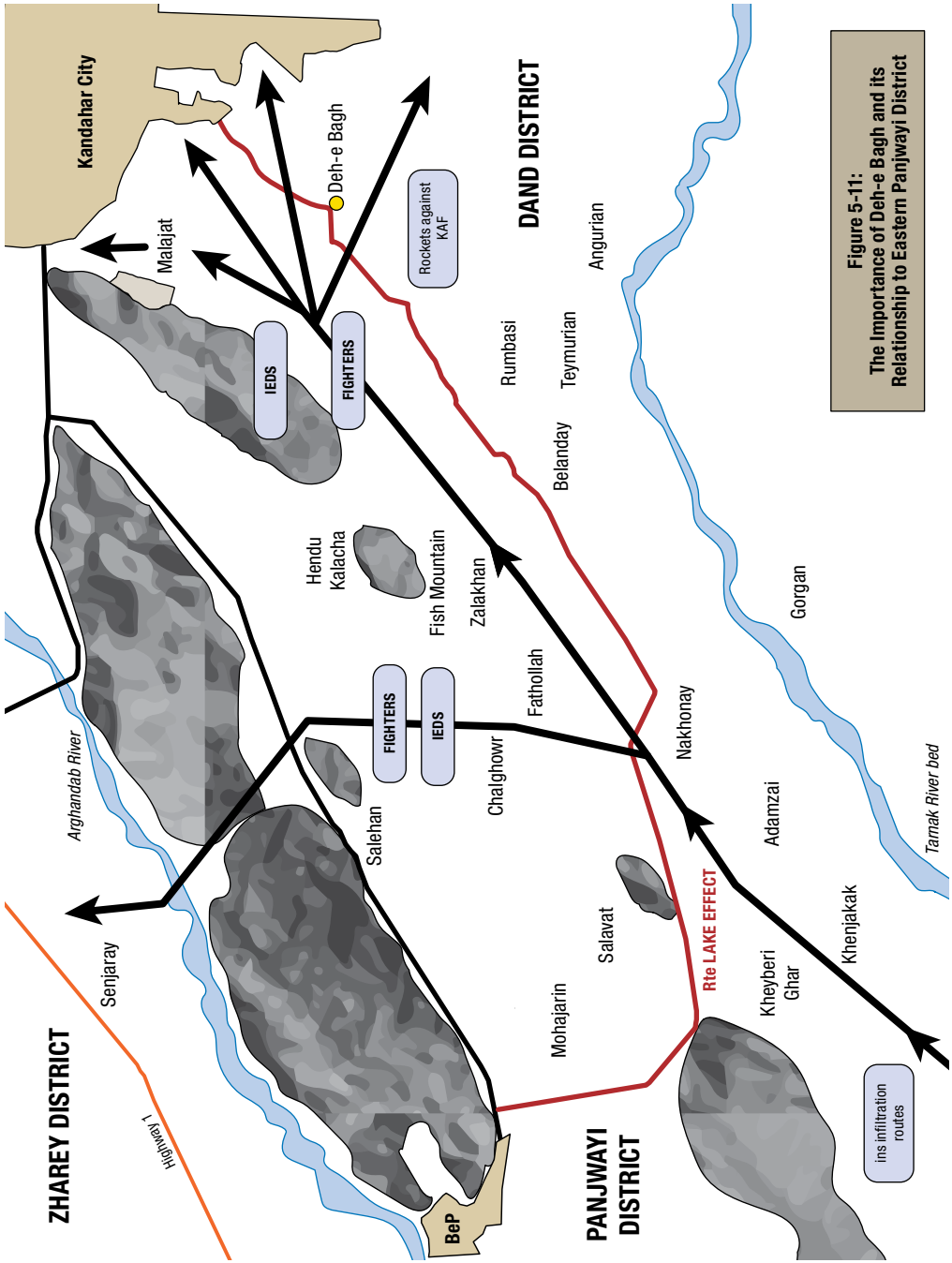

Figure 5-11: The Importance of Deh-e Bagh and its Relationship to Eastern Panjwayi District

structure opportunists would not happen to the Barakzais in Dand on Canada's watch. Indeed, some of the police in Dand were firmly associated with the Popalzai power structure and were paid for by Ahmad Wali Karzai,[273] while it was unclear how many Barakzai police there were or if they could counterbalance the Popalzais if it came to confrontation. Operation KALAY, according to BGen Vance, was, in the background, an attempt to demonstrate that the Barakzai and Popalzai could co-exist.[274] In terms of provincial-district dynamics, BGen Vance believed that the Canadians could work with Afghans to "bypass the bad actors because we're at the village level",[275] much in the way the PRT worked through the district development assemblies and community development councils to bypass the dysfunctional Provincial Development Committee.

The Vance headquarters could now build on a relatively permissive community, generate negative effects on enemy activity in the area, and promote positive messaging at all levels: local, district, provincial, national and possibly international. Up to now BGen Vance believed that the dominant Canadian narrative consisted of dead Canadians in coffins coming home via transport aircraft at Trenton. Operation KALAY could provide a new and positive Canadian narrative if handled properly.[276]

To implement KALAY, TF Kandahar reorganized its forces substantially. To implement this, TF Kandahar initiated a substantial reorganization of forces. Major Marc Verret, leading the P-OMLT, had been warned by his predecessor Major Alex Haynes that there were going to be changes when he arrived. The Police OMLT became the basis for Stabilization B Company, better known as Stab B. The sixty P-OMLT members were joined by an infantry platoon from Force Protection Company and an American Police Mentoring Team. There was Construction Management Organization's CMT-2 (eventually augmented with personnel from CMT-1) led by the extremely able Captain Gary Silliker. Two-thirds of the CIMIC Company also became part of Stab B, as did three PSYOPS detachments and a MEWT. The combat engineers contributed a Badger AEV. The National Support Element created a detachment to support the Stab B's vehicle fleet which now included everything short of Leopard tanks. Vance referred to Stab B's 160 personnel as the "Combat Team of Love".[277]

The scheme of manoeuvre for Operation KALAY adhered to a shape-clear-hold-build process. During the shaping process Major Verret placed particular emphasis on bringing in the Afghan leadership at village and district level at the earliest stage and generating an atmosphere of inclusivity. Some elements were uncomfortable with this so the plan was adjusted so that Stab B would handle the clear phase rather than the battle group, which was shifted to handle an outer cordon. The clear itself, as Stab B made evident to all, was that 'clear' did not mean 'destroy.' Removal of the insurgents from the target area and keeping them out was the goal so that build could take place.[278] To make all of this happen,

however, Major Verret had to develop a personal relationship with district leader Nazek and convince him that Operation KALAY was not some temporary measure. Laying that groundwork took time but eventually Nazek and Verret reached an accommodation and KALAY could proceed.[279]

Operation KALAY, May–July 2009

Operation KALAY was then delayed by the Kandahar City security operation TOLO ATAL. At the same time, negotiations with General Matiullah Qati Khan regarding Afghan police participation in KALAY took time. Insulted by lack of consultation, he had to be assuaged. After receiving the full brief from Major Verret, Matiullah enthusiastically offered up 50 officers for augmented training.[280] The Shape phase commenced on 5 May and continued for five days. CIMIC teams established contact with the Kutchie nomads and held shuras with the Deh-e Bagh village leader, Haji Asadullah Khan.[281] (see Figure 5-12).

One of the first orders of business for the CIMIC team was to meet with the Community Development Council and inquire as to the status of development projects: the Council proved to be moribund. Another team from Stab B met with district Chief of Police to see where the thirty police officers that were undergoing training at Camp Nathan Smith by CIVPOL would fit in the Deh-e Bagh security plan. As it turned out, of the thirty police only one was Focused District Development qualified, which temporarily attenuated efforts on that line of operations.[282]

Stab B deployed to Deh-e Bagh on 19 May and established the operations command post. During this time, CIDA elements at the PRT worked to develop a long-term development plan with the Kandahar provincial representatives from the Department of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and Department of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock. Some entity pushed back by firing a 107mm rocket over the Dand District Centre on 21 May, but there was no damage. A joint Stab B-police patrol conducted an assessment patrols and no issues were identified.[283]

On 23 May, A Company 2 R22eR deployed deployed into platoon-sized leaguers west and south of Deh-e Bagh while most of the accompanying Canadian-mentored kandak established a leaguer to the north and then moved opposite the Kutchie village. The Afghan National Police platoon staged out of the Dand District Centre. The next day, the whole force established a web of vehicle checkpoints, observation posts and traffic-control points around Deh-e Bagh, while combat engineers from 51e Escadron built bed-down facilities and assessed the canal. Splitting the community in half, A Company cleared west and south while the Afghan army and police cleared the northern part. Close in behind, the Construction Management Organization and a road contractor were already establishing dumping areas for road-building materials. During the clear the only weapon found was a 107-mm rocket pointed at the district centre. It was destroyed by the EOD team.[284]

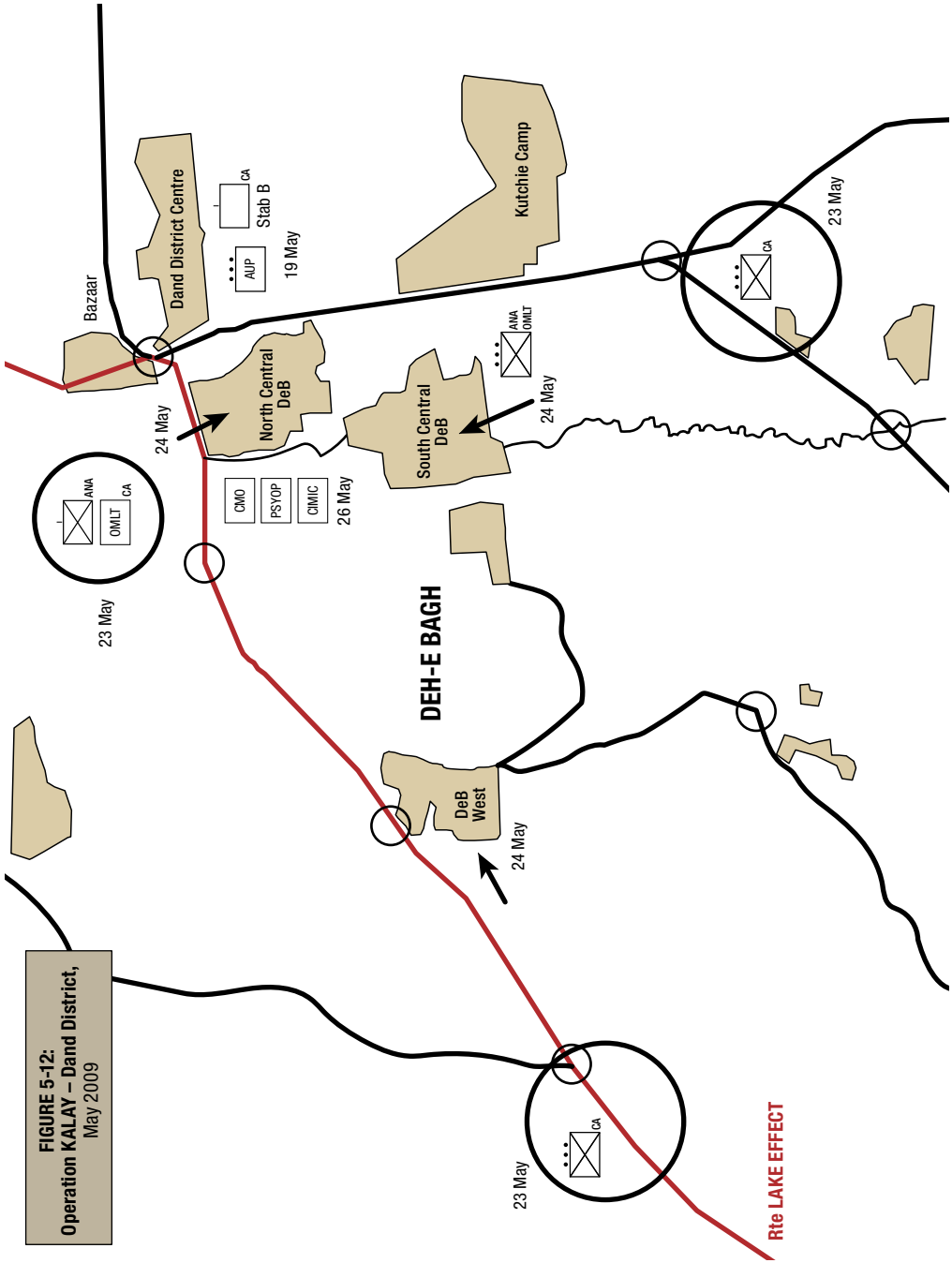

Figure 5-12: Operation KALAY – Dand District, May 2009

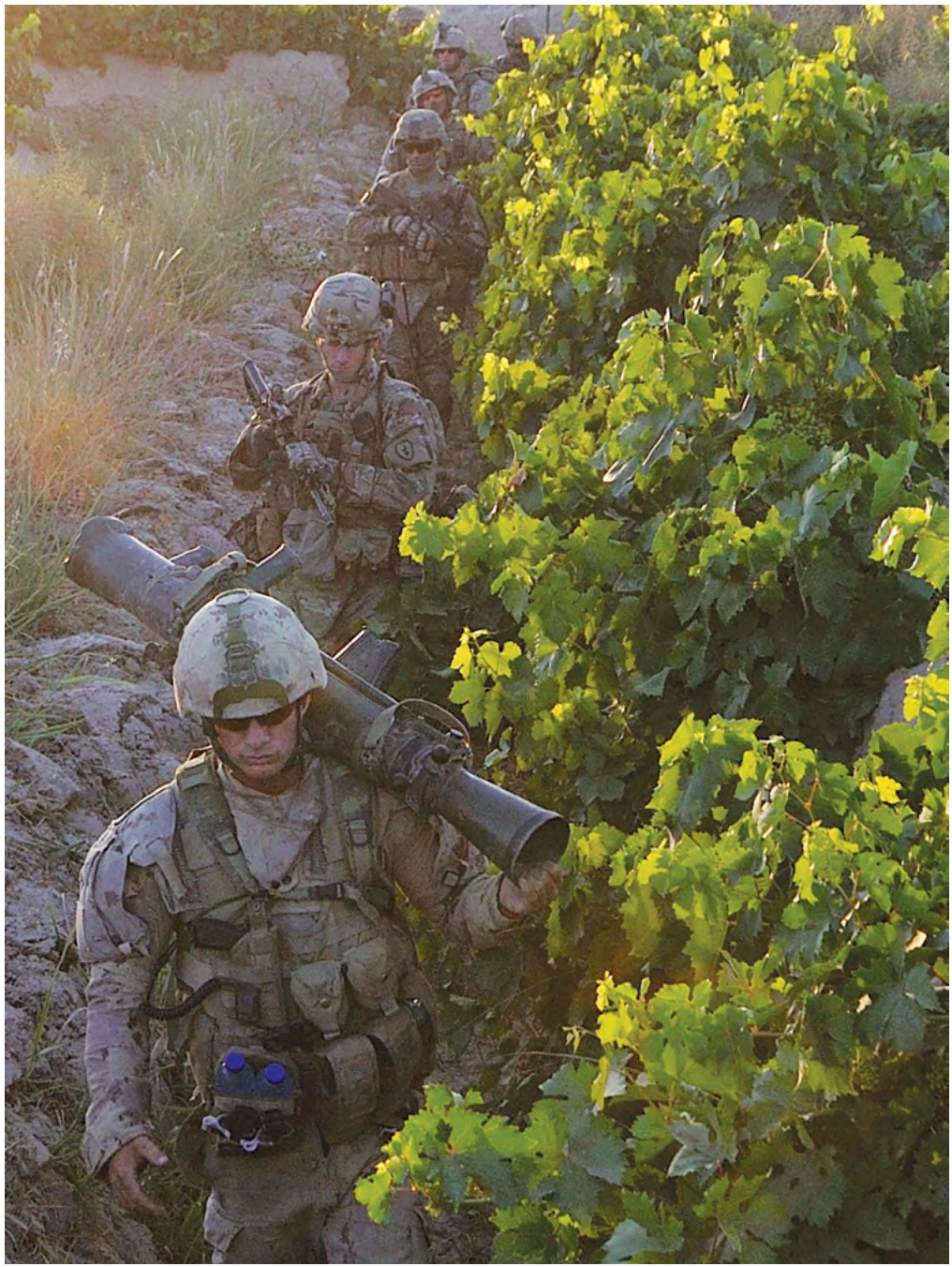

Photo Credit: DND AR2011-0200-09

2 R22eR moves into eastern Panjwayi District in preparation for Operation KALAY, the development and protection of Deh-e Bagh in neighbouring Dand District.

As of 26 May, Stab B moved on to the build phase of the operation, which broke down into several components. Stab B determined, with the local Afghan leadership, that the main project focus should be a canal project, followed by the remediation of large craters left over from the Soviet period, and then road improvement to ensure connectivity among the Deh-e Bagh communities. The methodology involved local hiring for the work, employing one male per family. Importation of outsider workers by power brokers would not be tolerated as this had negative effects in Zharey district back in 2008. The Construction Management Organization took on all these projects.[285]

Major Verret was *au fait* with previous issues in Canadian religious engagement policy and as a result he focused CIMIC's quick impact projects on supporting the Deh-e Bagh mullahs. There were ten mosques in the area, with two mullahs moving between them. The biggest problem, they explained, was the lack of ablution facilities. Verret ensured resources were shifted to construct them. Verret received "'push back' from almost everybody" except Vance and those experienced staff in the TF Kandahar headquarters who understood the need for religious engagement. Another CIMIC project was the school. The teacher was making more money on the canal project as a digger then he would in the classroom, so incentives were provided to convince him to return to teaching and the school was refurbished. The quick-impact projects went forward.[286]

On the security front, Stab B worked to establish a purely Afghan Joint District Coordination Centre with associated help lines, and PSYOPS distributed cards with the number. On one occasion the centre received a call from a group of citizens who, on their own, arrested Taliban in their community. And, within the first week of operation, sixteen IEDs were reported to the coordination centre by local people.[287] The IEDs were found on several in and out routes around Deh-e Bagh and destroyed by an EOD team. A Company patrolled the edge of town but made no contact with the emplacers. A pair of 107-mm rockets were launched from the community of Chineh to the south, but they missed and caused no damage.[288]

Ensuring that the Kutchie were not kept out of events, a CIMIC team deployed to the Kutchie village and delivered aid to the leader, Dilawey Khan. Afghan police and Police OMLT mentors handled the security for this part of the operation. The Kutchie were surprised and welcomed the Canadian-Afghan team. The CIMIC team leader asked Khan if any of the Kutchie were interested in joining the Afghan police and, as it turned out, he was positively inclined.[289]

The need to firmly re-establish the Dand District Centre as the functional symbol of governance meant that it had to be repaired as quickly as possible. To this end the Specialist Engineer Team deployed from the PRT to survey the situation and initiate a bidding process for reconstruction. The Construction Management Organization already had a

local contract established to clear away the debris and this effort was well advanced by the time the Specialist Engineer Team arrived.[290]

Consultations with the Deh-e Bagh population through the re-invigorated Community Development Council established that seven projects were required: the bazaar needed work to improve trade; the children needed a playground; the irrigation canal needed work; a new connector road to improve traffic flow and increase trade were required. The Kutchies needed a road to their site and wells. Their local mosque needed repair and refurbishment. The plan was to have all of these projects completed within 60 days.[291] By 2 June, District Leader Nazek received several "calls from other villages in the district soliciting aid" as word got out to the rest of Dand District.[292]

Photo Credit: DND IS2009-1025-04

Operation KALAY brought resources to enhance policing and security in Dand District, which covered the southwest approaches to Kandahar City.

ISTAR reports indicated that Operation KALAY alarmed the insurgents, and they were preparing a reaction designed to weaken its positive effects. On 29 May, an Afghan police patrol accompanied by Canadian mentors was ambushed in Belanday. Amidst the close-quarter fighting in the village, medical technician LS Pier-Vincent Michaud treated the wounded while under intense fire and extracted them from the kill zone. LS Michaud received the Medal of Military Valour for these actions.

The enemy eventually probed the KALAY stabilization zone from the Belandy area instead. The Afghan police detachment in Belandy came under assault and called the provincial coordination centre via cell phone for back up. The Canadians at the provincial operations coordination centre called TF Kandahar who were able to direct a pair of OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters to Belanday. The enemy hid, so the OCC-P staff instructed the helicopters to back off and told the police to fire in the direction of the insurgents when the enemy came out again. The helicopters came back on station and destroyed the enemy with rockets and .50 cal fire.[293]

The enemy had more in store for Deh-e Bagh. Stab B facilitated a Dand district security shura which included all of the participating forces in Deh-e Bagh and environs. From this meeting they learned that the Quetta Shura allocated 250 Pakistani Taliban to wipe out the Op KALAY project. Another Taliban plan involved rotating Dand-based fighters with Helmand-based fighters "to enable the insurgents to operate without remorse." To maintain stand off from Deh-e Bagh an Afghan army-Afghan police joint patrol plan was established by the security shura, with particular focus on Chineh village to the south.[294] An insurgent team hit a peripheral checkpoint six kilometers from Dand proper and shot it out with the police, killing two and wounding four.[295]

Meanwhile, the Construction Management Organization and local people worked together to clean up the canal system, with the canal itself being completed on 21 June. The list from the Community Development Council grew to include a community ablution facility, solar powered lights, and repairs to the village shura building and a mosque.[296] District Leader Nazek, however, was "concerned that the line ministries from Kandahar City do not want to play an active part in Dand."[297] They were likely being influenced not to do so by the 'UN cluster' agencies who did not want to be involved in the Deh-e Bagh operation because they were supposedly 'neutral'.[298] Ken Lewis, the RoCK, attempted to cajole the line ministries into providing service delivery.[299]

The enemy kept trying Deh-e Bagh on and launched an IED attack against a police checkpoint three kilometers west of Dand at Walakan. This strike killed three and wounded two police officers.[300] By 24 June, Operation KALAY had made enough progress that all three levels of the Afghan government — district, provincial and national — were willing to hold a news conference in Deh-e Bagh to show it off to the national and international media. Two days later, the new ISAF commander, General Stanley McChrystal, flew in to visit the community. This was a significant development. McChyrstal was in the process of assessing his new command in order to feed into the ongoing Obama strategy evaluation, which continued throughout 2009. What McChrystal saw in the Canadian and Afghan achievements in Dand District was the possibility of moving beyond the stalemate in Afghanistan, at least at the local and district levels, and that there was a new way of doing so.[301]

CIMIC ranged out from Deh-e Bagh into neighbouring communities. In Teymurian,

> The security of the village appeared to be normal; there were a lot of children. Those persons [the CIMIC team] approached for direction greeted us with courtesy. [source] indicated that it is not good for ISAF to visit his village as the insurgents threaten the local populace. He asked that, when the [CIMIC team] would like to meet with him, that they meet at the Dand District Centre … the local population avoids taking LAKE EFFECT road because of the number of IEDs on the route. This has had a negative impact on trade and supplies in the village … [The CIMIC team] asked him what he thinks about the ISAF presence in Deh-e Bagh. He indicated that, since the arrival of ISAF troops, the presence of the insurgents in the area has decreased.[302]

The Hold part of Operation KALAY ran into complications. The Canadian police mentors learned that Dand District had, in fact, four separate police groups. The District Chief of Police and his men fell under the provincial headquarters of the Afghan National Police in Kandahar City. The district Chief of Police and his men came under the provincial police headquarters in Kandahar City. The district leader had Afghan police controlled by him in the name of the Governor; there were Afghan police controlled by the Sherzai family; and there were several checkpoints manned by the "ANP reserve".[303] This balance of power worked, for reasons inexplicable to the Canadians. Despite the tangle of relationships, however, the Canadian mentors could get commanders from all four groups into one room with the Afghan National Army, the National Directorate of Security, the P-OMLT and CIMIC to make things happen. There was friction between the ANA and the official Dand force and this had to be gripped before it spun out of control.[304]

And Deh-e Bagh continued to improve. The community asked for a bypass route so they could access Route Lake Effect, a move that required the district leader's involvement to acquire private properties so it could be constructed. By using a consultative process to forestall land use grievances, a major source of antigovernment behaviour was avoided.[305]

Other agencies continued to resist involvement in Deh-e Bagh, however. CIDA and DFAIT repeatedly met with UN-HABITAT to see how the Deh-e Bagh Community Development Council might transition to the new UN construct, the Clustered Community Development Council. There was push back from a UN-HABITAT representative:

> They did not agree with the strategy of injecting money into the district shura, as that will only empower one tribe. He believes this will marginalize other tribes as they are not represented at the district shura and will not receive the benefits of the KVA. He stated that the KVA is a poor strategy and does not believe it will prove to be successful in helping defeat the insurgency.[306]

CIDA and DFAIT representatives also worked with district leader Nazek, who by this time acted as a bridge between the Deh-e Bagh village leader and the Dand District Department of Rural Reconstruction and Development representative. How would the new Clustered Community Development Councils relate to the existing District Development Assembly and then how would or could that be applied to Deh-e Bagh? Nazek wanted to meet with UN-HABITAT and get their input.[307] And that proved to be the sticking point, as it had been back in Kandahar in 2002 and in Kabul in 2003: How to bring in development on the heels of stabilization.

Meanwhile, A Company continued with presence patrols in the villages on the perimeter of Deh-e Bagh. Chineh West, which was supposed to empty, was in fact populated and the locals fled when the Canadian patrol arrived. ISTAR reportage picked up an enemy IED emplacement team operating east of their patrol area. A CU-170 Heron moved into an orbit to observe and further ISTAR information indicated a Taliban commander was present, so the TF Kandahar operations centre brought in an airstrike with a B-1B bomber. The PRT's quick reaction force deployed to conduct exploitation and assessed that there were three enemy dead, including a known enemy commander.[308]

The enemy kept trying to insert suicide vehicles into the KALAY stability box but the checkpoint cordon forced them to detonate them against the police instead. Two IED attacks took place against the northern cordon. One of these was a new type of weapon, the Directionally Focused Fragmentation Charge or DFFC which was essentially a large homemade Claymore mine. The suicide car was directed against Afghan army and Canadian mentors after insurgents sprayed small arms fire at the northern gate. One soldier was killed and another seven wounded.[309] And the insurgents tried again. Another IED detonated on Route Lake Effect against a police target, killing two and wounding five. A pair of secondaries designed to target first responders were also uncovered. And, since Deh-e Bagh remained impervious, the Taliban instigated anti-government activities in neighbouring Belanday by kidnapping the village leader.[310]

The people of Deh-e Bagh refused to be intimidated. By the end of July an estimated 359 locally-employed people supported reconstruction and development projects in and around Deh-e Bagh.[311] There had not been an attack against the Dand district centre in over five weeks.[312] And this was the height of the summer fighting season. NATO Secretary-General Anders Rasmussen visited Deh-e Bagh with COMISAF General McChrystal and was overheard to say "I have got the very best impression. This is exactly the approach we will pursue in the coming years."[313]

Panjwayi District Operations, June–July 2009

In response to Operation KALAY, the insurgent leadership in Panjwayi district agitated the population in order to distract the security forces while preparing to escalate active measures against Deh-e Bagh. They ordered their local commanders to have villages under their control send one elder and one mullah from each community to Zangabad, clearly an escalatory move in providing parallel governance.[314] The Taliban also attempted to influence district leader Haji Baran by using a combination of missives from Sperwan elders and demonstrations in Bazaar-e Panjwayi. The Canadians wanted to defuse the demonstrations and counter the elder's messaging:

> The elders all agreed that the insurgents are the cause of the problems, they complain about ISAF, ANA and AUP because they can. The elders basically stated that they are the middlemen who are stuck within a struggle for power. This demonstrates that they do not yet see themselves as the beneficiaries of the actions of [the security forces]. They also alluded to intimidation within their villages.[315]

CIMIC teams in Bazaar-e Panjwayi reported that "the perception of a deteriorating security situation is having a negative effect on business in the bazaar … [the insurgents] discourage residents from speaking with ISAF and ANSF and they have been disseminating information that discredits the ANSF."[316] CIMIC and PSYOPS worked with Haji Baran to counter the insurgent messaging.

At the same time, Baran was undercutting the Construction Management Organization on the HYENA Paving Project (the former FOSTERS paving project). Blue Hackle, the new private security company protecting the Bennett-Fouch contracted paving crew, was engaged by small arms fire during its morning clearance operations and CMO ceased work. Baran was "upset about Blue Hackle getting the tender for security on the site" and the implications were that it was not necessarily insurgent action against the project.[317]

Meanwhile, the 2 R22eR Battle Group launched Operation CONSTRICTOR to generate breathing room for Operation KALAY in Deh-e Bagh[318] (see Figure 5-13). For the most part, Afghan army participation in the operation was limited by the need to maintain forces as part of Operation TOLO ATAL, while the Panjwayi district police were distracted with problems elsewhere in the district. Recce elements moved on to the Girowal Ghar feature late on 3 June but were immediately hit with small arms and mortar fire as they deployed. Harrier fighter-bombers and MQ-1 Predators took out the enemy positions. The EROC vehicle suite cleared Route Lake Effect on the morning of 4 June so that A Company could pull out of its positions and deployed west to Belanday, while B Company moved in from Zharey and situated itself west of that community.

As A Company moved in, it came under fire from an RPG team, which was dispatched with M-777 fire. An orbiting MQ-9 spotted reinforcing enemy and dropped a GBU-38 bomb and a Hellfire missile, killing nine insurgents.[319]

The next day, A Company moved into blocking positions so that B Company could clear Fatollah. LCol Paul instructed C Company to be prepared to deploy from Sperwan Ghar to clear Chalghowr. When B Company entered Fatollah, they "were received by pro-ISAF/GIRoA local nationals." A Company then moved to clear the area between Belanday to Nakhonay. Some small caches were found, notably inside the mosques.[320] On day three, B Company secured Fatollah, while C Company completed its clearance of Chalghowr. A Company continued to block south towards Nakhonay. There was no contact. ISTAR reportage suggested that the insurgents dispersed to Malajat and Khenjakak.[321]

A Company and B Company then moved into Nakhonay. As B Company patrolled west of the community, Pte Alexandre Péloquin of 3 R22eR triggered an antipersonnel mine; he was evacuated to the Role 3 hospital at KAF, but succumbed to his wounds. A Company found an IED factory protected by antipersonnel mines, and uncovered a small-arms cache with three machine-guns and ammunition. An engineer LAV from 51e Escadron was damaged when it struck an IED while manoeuvring.[322]

While Operation CONSTRICTOR continued to disrupt the insurgents in the Nakhonay, District Leader Haji Baran called the Joint District Coordination Centre and told the staff that his three brothers had been kidnapped, and that the perpetrators were going to behead them one by one if a particular insurgent detainee was not released. Baran then proceeded to the Route Hyena road paving project and ordered the workers to cease activities: "he told the workers that he is the person who has the authority to hire workers, that the workers don't need Blue Hackle [security] and that he can provide security." There was some consternation among Canadian CMO and CIMIC personnel. However, district Chief of Police Naeem spotted Baran meeting with insurgents in Sperwan later that day and passed that information on to the to the Joint District Coordination Centre.

Baran drove to Kandahar City, and then returned on 14 June for a shura with BGen Vance. He told Vance that "he believed that either he or the district chief of police would need to be removed" because they did not get along. Baran called Naeem and asked him to come to the meeting as Vance moved on to discuss the paving project issue. In the middle of the meeting, word came in that District Chief of Police Naeem was dead, along with EOD technician Cpl Martin Dubé of the 5e Régiment du Génie du combat. The police had found and cordoned a two-device trap near a culvert on Route Hyena East, and called in the quick-reaction force. One device detonated while it was being exploited.[323]

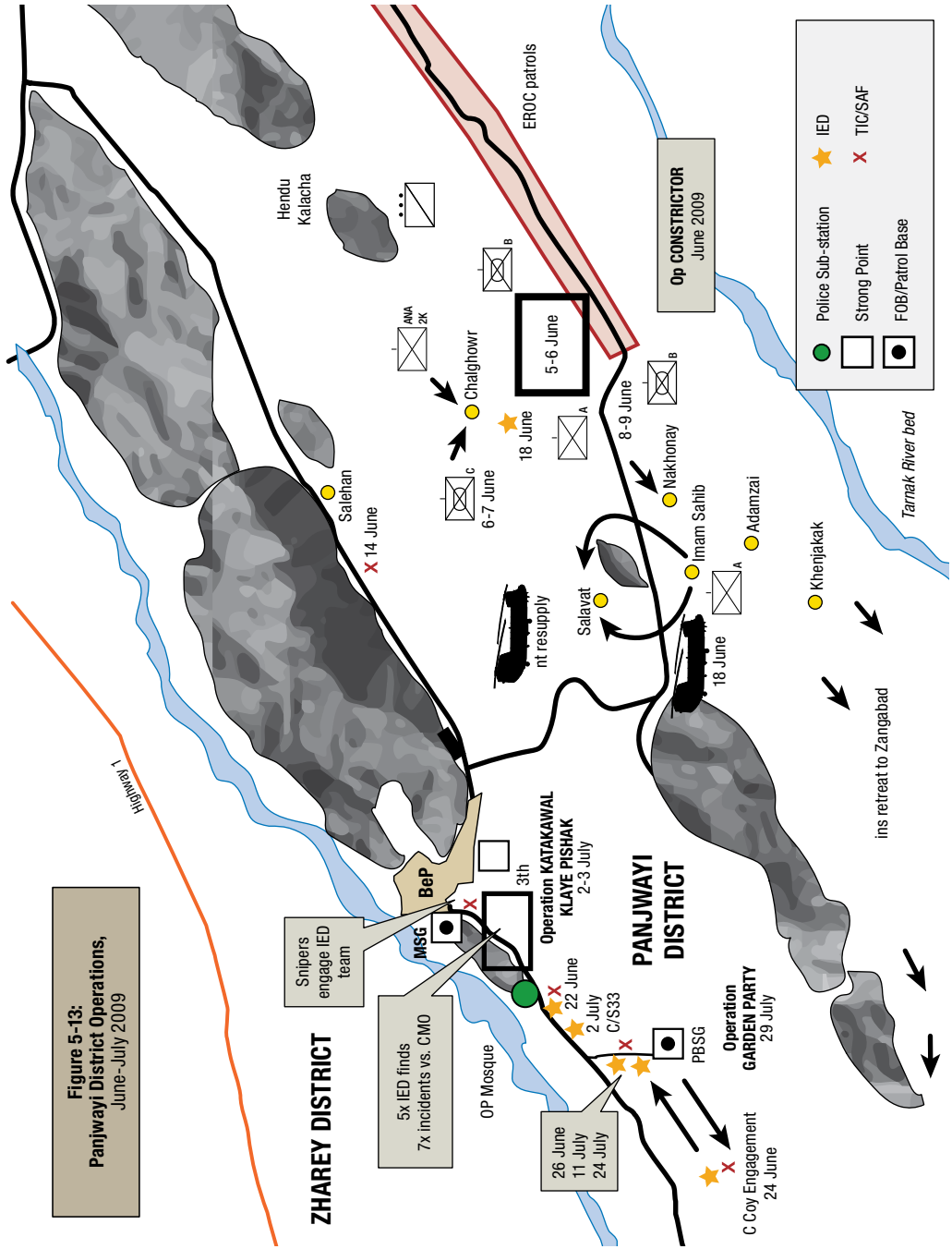

Figure 5-13: Panjwayi District Operations, June-July 2009

Canadian police mentors reported that Naeem's death destabilized policing in Panjwayi. A significant percentage of the police force had personal loyalty to him and were not from the district. Some would stay out of loyalty to Naeem's son. Thrown into disarray, the P-OMLT told TF Kandahar that police support was withdrawn from Operation CONSTRICTOR.[324] The enemy then focused operations in the Sperwan Ghar-Op Mosque area along Route Hyena West while CONSTRICTOR was still in play. A number of IEDs killed and wounded police and army personnel over the course of three days, which drew out the quick reaction force. These were complex ambushes involving IEDs and small arms fire.[325]

Meanwhile, the Canadian Helicopter Force inserted A Company on both sides of Salavat to block while Recce Platoon and snipers moved to the south. C Company was supposed to conduct the sweep but its lead engineering vehicle hit an IED as it reached the start line south of Chowlghor, wounding the crew. The EROC vehicles also hit an IED. The sweep went in anyway and recce and snipers reported several engagements into the night. There was no resistance. Significant information on the local Taliban cell and its parent network was discovered, as were a number of weapons caches. That night CH-147 Chinooks came in to resupply the forces leaguered near Salavat. The next day, two IED caches were discovered. Back in Bazaar-e Panjwayi, the quick reaction force deployed on five occasions to IED finds in the area.[326]

With CONSTRICTOR wrapping up, the Route Hyena paving project pushed to the fore. Work stopped for a week while the Construction Management Organization was locked in intense negotiations with Bennett-Fouch and Blue Hackle. To assuage Haji Baran, the paving sub-contractor was fired, and Baran and his partner took over the job. While negotiations were underway, seven IEDs were either found, triggered, or otherwise detonated by Afghan security forces patrolling Route Hyena West between OP Mosque and Route Brown. The workers felt "unsafe" and refused to continue. The Construction Management Organization and CIMIC were forced to approach Haji Baran to get the project going again.[327]

C Company, which was down to two platoons as one was deployed to Spin Boldak to provide security for the large FOB being built for Stryker Brigade, aggressively patrolled around Sperwan Ghar after their return from CONSTRICTOR. Every time patrols moved they were tracked by three separate teams of fighting age males. CU-170 Heron UAVs were brought in to develop pattern of life data and enemy activity peaked. After patrols were engaged with small arms fire, M-777 fire was brought to bear when identification could be established. The return patrol routes, however, were seeded with antipersonnel mines, one of which wounded a Canadian soldier. C Company reported that "The fact that insurgents were capable of installing the IEDs within 1 km of [Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar] indicates that they have complete freedom of movement in the area. This is also preventing us from having a presence amongst the local population."[328]

Consequently, LCol Paul ordered 51e Escadron to survey and widen Route Brown. CIMIC operators came in to handle the land-acquisition process, and the Badger AEVs dropped their blades and plowed a stand-off zone. (Route-widening for security extended to other areas in Panjwayi District under Operation GARDEN PARTY.) Any enemy forces wishing to head east would have to either emerge into the open as they crossed BROWN, go along HYENA WEST or the river bed, or skirt all the way south of Sperwan Ghar.[329]

As the hot summer transitioned from June into July, however, there were simply not enough forces to maintain 'eyes on' these areas and the enemy slipped through. C Company was down a platoon, the police in Panjwayi were completely ineffective now that Chief Naeem's son no longer wanted to lead the district police. Haji Baran tried to get an untrained shopkeeper appointed chief of police, and the Afghan army was frequently pulled away to other tasks like TOLO ATAL in the city. Just when the CMO, CIMIC, P-OMLT and Blue Hackle had sorted out security on the paving project, the police reneged and negotiated for more money. C Company suffered an IED strike on Route Hyena West while transiting from Sperwan Ghar to Ma'Sum Ghar. Fortunately, one of the enemy IED teams killed itself with a premature detonation and the IED activity dropped off temporarily.[330] Increased enemy use of anti-personnel mines claimed the life of MCpl Charles-Philippe Michaud of 2 R22eR, who died on 4 July of wounds sustained during a patrol on 23 June, and Pte Sébastien Courcy, also of 2 R22eR, who died on 16 July when he fell off a cliff after triggering a mine.

On 2–3 July, when the Afghan infantry companies had finally returned from Kandahar City, they mounted Operation KATAKAWAL KLAYE PISHAK to sweep the area around OP Mosque, and work on Route Hyena ceased for the duration. That night, Canadian snipers engaged an insurgent IED emplacement team on Route Hyena West. Paving resumed the next day, and soon 300 local men showed up for work — and to get paid for the previous three weeks: "This should assist in keeping the economy of Bazaar-e Panjwayi flowing since the local shopkeepers are no longer extending credit to the project workers."[331]

The PRT tried to increase its involvement in Panjwayi at this time and sent a DFAIT representative to work with Haji Baran on a "District Administrative Assembly" which looked like a replacement for the dysfunctional district development assembly. The District Administration Assembly drew in the main nongovernmental organization operating in the area, the Central Asian Development Group. District leader Baran considered these to be positive developments.[332] None of these changes, however, were able to attenuate the infiltration of the Bazaar-e Panjwayi area. Afghan security forces found eight IEDs in two days, one of which destroyed the shrine in a cemetery near the new district centre.[333]

A poem written by an insurgent was found at one IED site:[334]

Karzai Sahib
This is a death battlefield
Playing with the country
You are not the Afghan Peoples leader
And you are not doing what you have to do
Gul Zade (you were brought up better than that)
Karzai Sahib
This is a death battlefield.
—Haji Bakht Mohammed

Kandahar City Operations, June–July 2009

In June, Provincial Chief of Police Matiullah Qati Khan approved several new approaches to security operations in Kandahar City, including daily early-morning counter-IED route patrols based on similar operations that were underway in Zharey and Panjwayi.[335] During the reorganization of the Kandahar City security plan, 205 Corps agreed to maintain a company-sized quick-reaction force at the Old Corps Headquarters. The idea of Joint Patrols with the Kandahar City police emerged; the army had more credibility, but the police needed added firepower to protect them while they carried out policing duties (as opposed to militia-type duties). Throughout June, Canadians in the P-OMLT and on the provincial coordination centre worked with the army, police, and the National Directorate of Security to conduct intelligence-cued operations. Stab A got involved as well, eventually accompanying the Afghans to assist with the outer cordon because Stab A had access to ISTAR resources.

One of the first Joint Patrols was actually subsumed by a security alert at Sarposa Prison in early June. Stab A sortied to Sarposa to deliver Correctional Service Canada and DFAIT personnel for an assessment of the facility and its surroundings. Discussions with the District 2 police commander revealed that

> Some allegations of jail staff having links to Taliban or insurgents have been reported but not confirmed in any way. These difficulties could have security repercussions since power games internal to the jail could jeopardize the unity of command and open leadership to corrupt procedures or decisions. It appears likely that, even near Kandahar City, the Taliban have control of cellular coverage [with] the full knowledge of local nationals, Afghan security forces, and the government.[336]

Daily Joint Patrols sortied, and the OCC-P resurged as a focal point for Afghan-Canadian coordination. They were, however, reporting information in ways that it could be compiled and employed by field forces, so that was a start.[337] Canadians noticed, however, that something was not quite right. During the course of three consecutive operations in the Malajat area, the police changed their target at the last minute, claiming new information.

> It became clear that the ANP had again set the ANA and CF cordon away from the designated target area … it is believed this was done with the intent to either extort and perform abusive searches or conduct security ops and not be associated with [coalition forces] or [Afghan National Army].[338]

That said, police tracked and intercepted, on their own, a suicide bomber headed for the NDS headquarters building.

In addition to the Joint Patrols, 205 Corps launched Operation TOLO ATAL II with little warning and no mentor support, and 5th Kandak and part of 4th Kandak deployed into checkpoints southeast of the city. The operation lasted two days but it was unclear to the Canadian mentors what it turned up.[339]

Sorting out the Panjwayi police occupied General Matiullah Qati Khan throughout late June and on the second last day of the month, he decided that Azim Khan would take over in that district. Haji Baran was now pushing for an untrained gas station owner to occupy that position, presumably under Baran's tutelage, but General Matiullah wasn't buying into it and planned a trip down to the New District Centre to make the announcement. Before he could do so, however, a group of ANP officers assigned to an American special operations team burst into the compound housing the office of the Provincial Attorney General to demand the release of a comrade held for forging documents. Maitiullah Qati arrived to investigate and a firefight broke out. When the shooting stopped, ten men were dead and eight wounded. Among the dead were General Matiullah and his chief criminal investigations officer, Abdul Khaliq Hamdard, as well as their entire escort team. LCol Turenne deployed the PRT quick reaction force, who were instrumental in calming the situation down, while BGen Vance ordered an increased force posture for coalition forces within the city.[340]

The assault rocked Kandahar City. Matiullah's death was massively destabilizing to the security situation and especially the Kandahar police force, which was just starting to gain momentum in city security.[341] But the battle at the attorney general's compound was not an insurgent attack and, when probed, it revealed deeper problems in the governance-police line of operation. The Afghan organization that mounted the attack were personally recruited in 2002 by President Hamid Karzai to work with U.S. special operations forces in the campaign against Al Qaeda and the Taliban.[342] They had later been grouped with other organizations to act as a supporting force for various special operations forces, including

Ahmad Wali Karzai's Qandahar Security Force. Indeed, Ahmad Wali Karzai called for amnesty after the unit was arrested.[343] Forty-one members of the unit were arrested, sent to Kabul, and tried. In late December 2011, four were sentenced to death and the other 37 were sentenced to prison terms ranging from one year to 20 years.[344]

Back in Kandahar, BGen Mirwais Noorzai of the ANP took over as Provincial Chief of Police. Canadians involved with policing in Kandahar studied the attack on Matiullah and his escort, reading into it all sorts of possible motives related to the provincial power structure and what Matiullah and Khaliq may or may not have done to contribute to their demise. In stark terms, this case was a significant setback for the security effort in both Kandahar Province and the city.

There were few IED attacks in the city in June and July, though there was a nasty one directed at a US mentoring team that killed two people. By early July, Canadian assessments noted that:

> ANSF capacity to respond to intelligence leads that have resulted in triggering intelligence-led operations have uncovered numerous weapons-IED cache finds, countered suicide threats, and has accounted for approximately 1-2 IED finds a day. These are promising indicators.[345]

Unable to gain momentum in the city, the insurgency initiated another intimidation campaign. One of DFAIT's Afghan facilitators was kidnapped, along with his family, and interrogated in depth about Canadian PRT operations. A policeman was kidnapped and hanged, and two women were found dead with letters attached claiming that this is what would happen if people talked to ISAF.[346] Joint Patrols reported:

> …the insurgents are intimidating the majority of the local nation[al]s in the area. One local national stated that there have been a number of night letters put up in the local mosques. When asked which mosque, he refused to answer stating that the insurgents have a strong intelligence network in the area and will take action against him.[347]

Indeed, there was concern that the intimidation and propaganda campaign might influence the elections. The insurgents would "go to mosques in order to misinform the local nationals about the elections."[348]

The sporadic cellphone system, which was the only night-time link between the people and security forces, remained a huge issue. The PRT explored ways and means of improving police communication, including acquiring and installing Motorola repeater stations. The PRT also wanted to coordinate "efforts between ANSF and cell companies to improve security of transmission towers, thus improving the cell coverage to the local

nationals and in turn the local nationals' capacity to call in an IED and insurgent activity day and night."[349] Stab A participated in efforts to coordinate the response to this problem but, when coverage resumed, "the insurgents reinforced their threat to local nationals and the restriction from using cell phones by apparently putting a nail into three local nationals' [ears] as retaliation for breaking this directive."[350]

Kandahar City continued to suffer on the development front. Stab A patrols reported that the price of electricity was abnormally high, so much so that most families could afford only one hour of power per day. The potable water situation remained critical. CIMIC met with UN HABITAT, which had a budget of $7 million for water projects, but the UN agency rejected a hydrological survey by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and refused to "begin building new capabilities until they have a study conducted by an outside consulting firm."[351] Stab A "facilitated a conference call between Mayor Hamidi and the Mayor of Edmonton" so Hamidi could "gain knowledge on municipal management." Such connections were important. DFAIT, which held the governance portfolio, was culturally structured for nation-on-nation interaction and its staff had no expertise in municipal management.

The enemy's use of the mosques was a subject that previous Canadian task forces had been reluctant to get involved in, and in any case, the Other Government Departments were loathe to have anything to do with religion. In the Vance headquarters, however, this policy changed, and most particularly in the city. One important entity, the Kandahar Ulema Shura, had been devalued during Governor Assadullah Khalid's time and was in the process of re-gaining its footing under Governor Raufi when he was deposed as Governor. The Kandahar Ulema Shura was at this point recovering from years of assassinations and intimidation. Left unprotected by Khalid during his tenure, Wesa changed that policy and had the shura relocated to the Old Corps compound where they were secured by an army presence. Notably, the Afghan army's unit-level Religious Officers (mullahs) branch expanded in 2009 and played a significantly increased role in local operations. This synergy was beneficial to the counterinsurgency effort at all levels and in all directions.[352]

By reinvigorating the religious authorities, a key component of society crucial to legitimacy could be coaxed off the fence and over to the government side. Efforts by the J5 Branch at TF Kandahar played a role in this, and BGen Vance met with Haji Murcha Agha, an extremely influential man in religious circles:

> During the reign of the Taliban, Haji Murcha Agha rejected Mullah Omar's request to join the Taliban because he wanted to stay true to his followers. The Taliban could not harm Haji Murcha or his family because of the potential backlash of the population … [his] visiting the governor and the commander at the governor's palace is of great significance because normally people go to see Haji Murcha Agha and he does not visit people regardless of appointment or rank.

> However, Haji Murcha Agha knew the governor's father and made this exception. In the meeting, Haji Murcha Agha explained his frustration with the Taliban and with security forces because he felt they were destroying the villages in Kandahar. However, he enthusiastically supported the [KVA] initiative to help Kandaharis one village at a time. Upon departure, Haji Murcha Agha honoured the Commander with a formal blessing.[353]

When a Taliban IED damaged a mosque in Bazaar-e Panjwayi, a member of the staff at the Office of Religious Affairs accompanied the CIMIC team while it conducted its assessment. After a talk with the representative, the mullah condemned the insurgents and blamed them for the lack of security, and both men agreed that security forces repairing the mosque in good faith had a role to play in restoring faith in the government.[354]

Operations in Arghandab and Lower Shah Wali Kot Districts, June–July 2009

As the summer deepened, Maj Cauden's Recce Squadron maintained their focus on keeping the main service routes connecting to the Tarinkot road open in the summer. Various special operations forces units tracking insurgent leaders on occasion needed Recce Squadron's support as they went about the business of interdicting insurgents coming in from Khakrez and transiting through the 'seam' between the districts and into the city.[355]

Because of the deteriorating security situation, the attitude of the governor and the Afghan security forces to Arghandab and lower Shah Wali Kot districts changed overnight in early June. Recce Squadron deployed a command post to the Arghandab District police headquarters in anticipation of establishing a proper Joint District Coordination Centre along the lines of ones operating in Zharey, Panjwayi and Spin Boldak.[356] Governor Wesa directed that an Arghandab representative attend regular weekly security meetings, while pressure was applied to Haji Karimullah Naqibi, the Alikozai leader, to get over his issues related to Strong Point Jelawur.[357] 1-205 Brigade assigned two companies from 3rd Kandak to the Arghandab strong points, and arrangements were made to deploy Canadian mentors and engineers with them. On arrival, the Afghans and Canadians immediately launched patrols into Adirah and Babur communities. More NDS were assigned to Arghandab to improve intelligence collection and flow.[358] The police, however, were problematic and did not want to conduct joint patrols with the Army (though they agreed to joint operations). After some investigation, the Canadians learned:

> The ANP checkpoint commanders have been neglecting their duties since that attack on [chief of police Zmaray Khan] and … villagers are starting to either tolerate or support the Taliban / insurgents as they feel that the government cannot provide proper security for them.[359]

The Afghan National Army, however, was collecting information from its own local sources and through the OCC-P. With that information 3rd Kandak launched a snap cordon and search operation and was able to employ police, police mentors, OH-58D helicopters, Canadian UAV support, as well as CIMIC-like humanitarian aid drops in Jelawur. B Squadron supported 3rd Kandak with vehicle checkpoints and patrols.[360]

As the patrols ranged out, they learned that there was an insurgent base in Char Bagh, which was only 3 kilometers from Sarposa Prison. The Taliban set up a parallel governance structure that taxed the local farmers and laid an IED ring to discourage patrols.[361] In other areas, local people told patrols that "no one from the government had been around to take their names for the voting registration as of yet but they had all intentions of voting in the upcoming elections, even if they had to use their old cards."[362]

There was little enemy contact in June after these forces came into the district. A larger surge, called RAMBAGH, was planned for late June, but the availability of sub-units from 2 R22eR Battle Group was in question. There was little enemy contact in June after these forces came into the district. The American police mentors wound up in an engagement, as did a Recce Squadron patrol, but nothing remotely resembling the contacts in previous months. By this time a Route Clearance Package was operating in the district, clearing the roads on a regular basis. The worst event was an IED that targeted an Afghan army units and its OMLT, killing three Afghan soldiers and wounding seven others. Canadian police mentors learned of "two separate incidents … involving local nationals assisting [ANA] checkpoints that were under contact in Arghandab and Khakrez districts by joining in the fight against the insurgents."[363]

Operation RAMBAGH went ahead on 26 June and was quickly followed by two other intelligence-cued quick-pulse operations, WARYAZ and SABUN. These were packages of Afghan army, police, American and Canadian mentors, and Recce Squadron Coyotes launched into areas against compounds of interest and, if nothing was found, the forces would fan out, patrol, then move on. Chief of Police Zmaray Khan assessed that these pulses "put the insurgents on edge and they are avoiding staying overnight in villages. They are establishing small camps in the desert north of Jelawur" — that is, away from the district's population centres.[364]

The Arghandab district leader, meanwhile, tried to rally his weary population. Collecting project proposals, he approached CIMIC during a shura but the Canadians refused to accept them in front of the assembled elders, stating that projects would not be approved until security was improved. The shura members walked away from the meeting. Meanwhile, the insurgents conducted a systematic intimidation campaign. Villagers were threatened with death after an American mentoring team dropped off food in one community. When put together, these threats were assessed as having "an effective coercive effect".[365] As in other districts, the security forces could not be everywhere and the Joint District Coordination Centre system had only just been established. It was almost too little, too late but Recce Squadron and the OMLT continued to hold the line with their Afghan counterparts until the American forces designated for Arghandab could deploy in August.

Zharey District Operations, June–July 2009

With the focus on Operation KALAY and the eastern Panjwayi area, Zharey district was by now considered to be a disrupt zone by TF Kandahar planners. Enemy activity in the district was an extension of previous operations: infiltration of the Asheque/Senjaray area east of Route Summit with the intent of ambushing convoys on Highway 1. Suffering from logistical problems limiting the insurgents to one weapon for every two fighters, the enemy threw themselves into the fight anyway. In one such engagement in Makuan, B Company brought the M-777's to bear and reported that shelling killed two local Taliban commanders along with their men. While this action was ongoing, another enemy cell detonated a huge IED east of Patrol Base Wilson, completely cratering Highway 1. The new Afghan contractor for the roads assisted by the Culvert Repair Service Agreement (brokered by the PRT Specialist Engineer Team and CIMIC) swung into action but it would take at least eighteen days to completely repair the highway. Canadian engineers worked to construct a bypass to handle the traffic flow.[366] (see Figure 5-14 and 5-14a).

CU-170 Herons and MQ-1 Predators continued to observe enemy activity in the district and from time to time were able to gain positive identification and cue F-15s and OH-58D's to engage careless enemy fighters moving around their 'safe havens' in Nahlgam and Sia Choy. The IEDs continued on Highway 1 resulting in the loss of a Canadian EOD team robot that backed over a pressure-plate IED.[367]

BGen Vance worked with Regional Command (South) to gain the use of the Regional Battle Group (South) for Operation TORA ARWA, beginning on 10 June, and this time the tasking went to the 3rd (Black Watch) Battalion, Royal Regiment of Scotland (3 Scots). An airmobile raid of a type that was by now almost routine, TORA ARWA put 3 Scots into landing zones around Nahlgam with a company of Afghan infantry and their Canadian mentor team, all travelling in CH-147 Chinooks once CU-170 Herons had

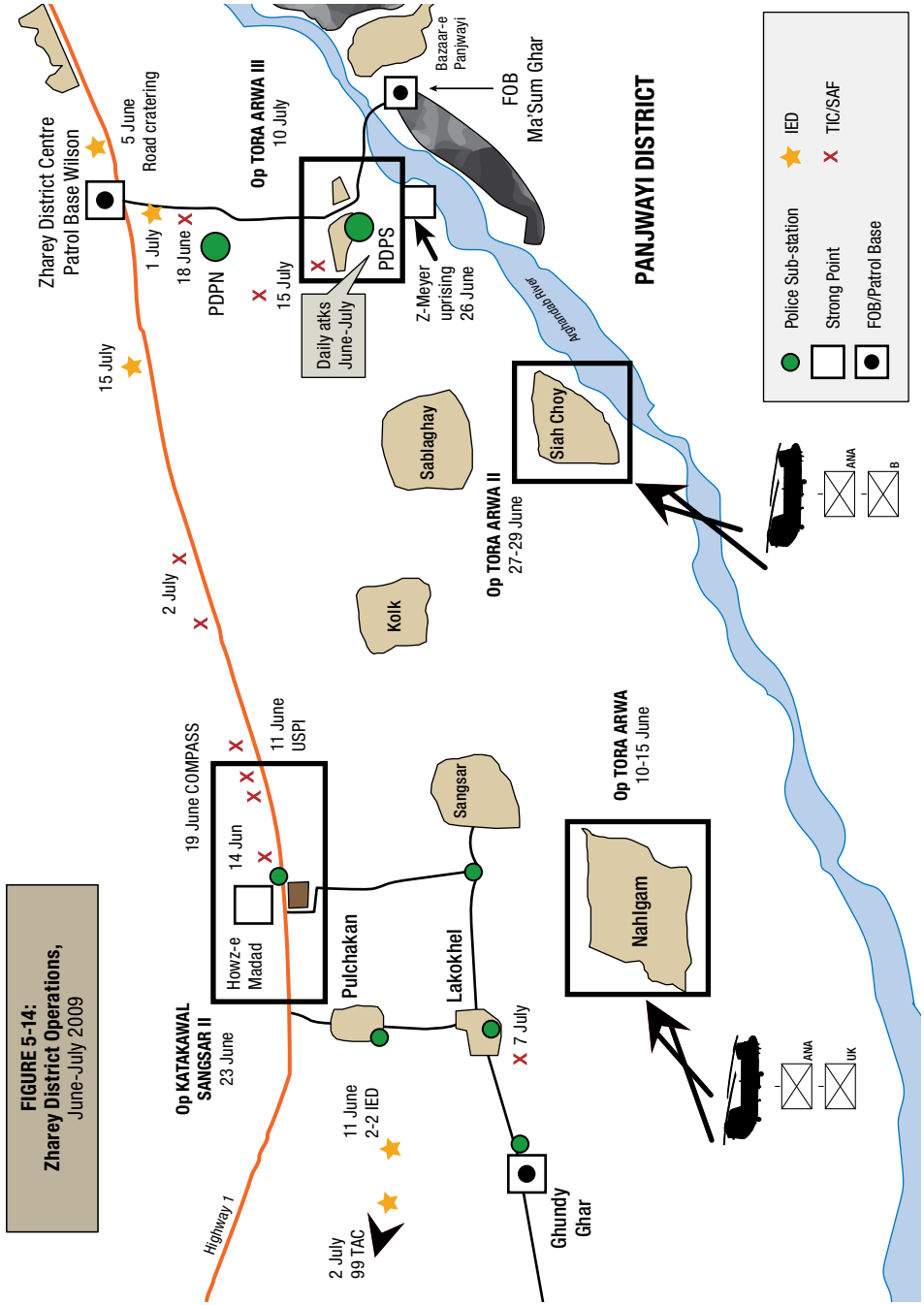

Figure 5-14: Zharey District Operations, June-July 2009

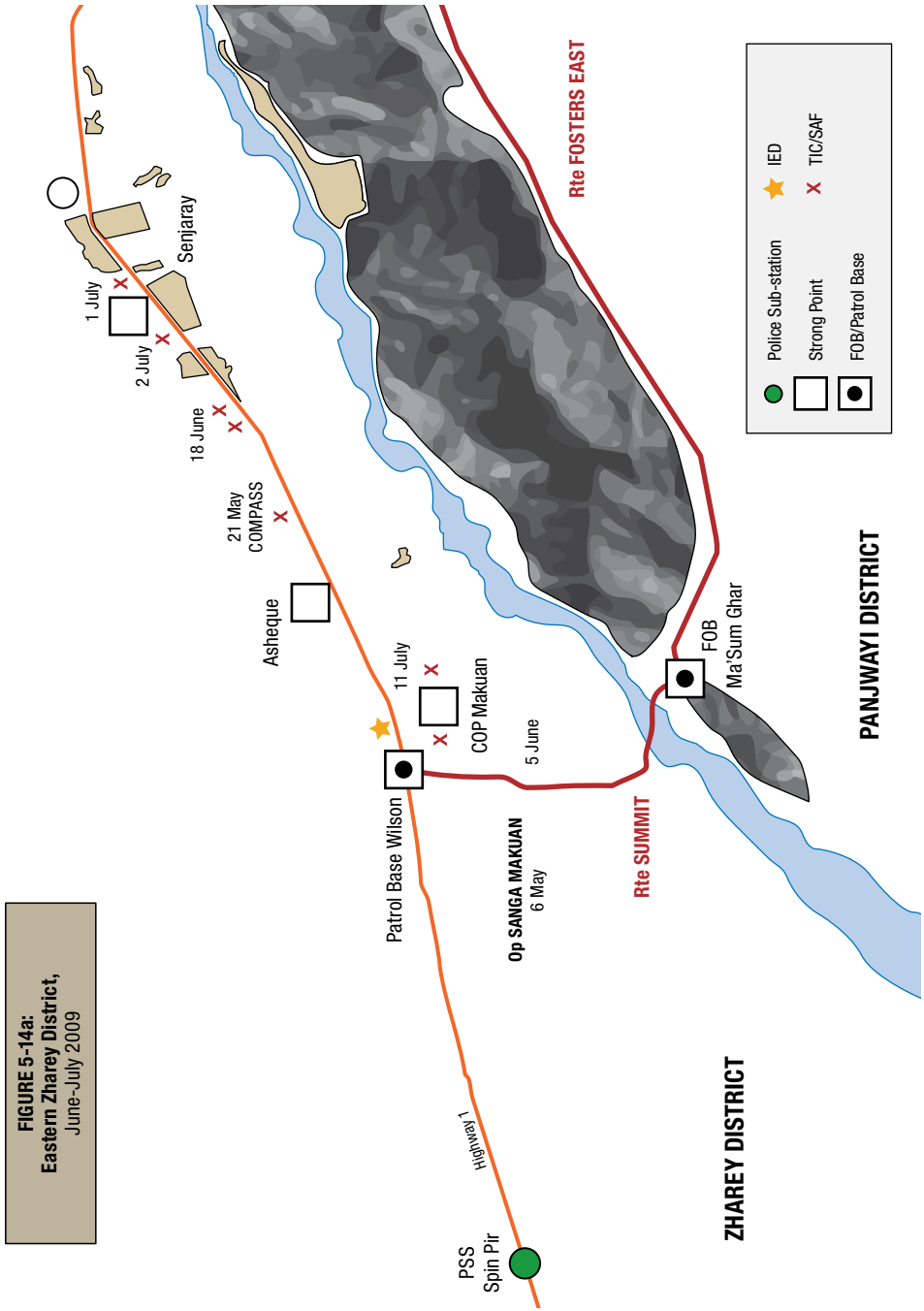

FIGURE 5-14a:
Eastern Zharey District,
June-July 2009

Figure 5-14a: Eastern Zharey District, June-July 2009

cleared the area. Immediately upon landing, the composite force was attacked "from all cardinal points." Snipers and mortars quietly established on Ghundy Ghar provided support as the three infantry companies combed the compounds of Nahlgam for IED factories and caches. The Afghan and British troops started taking casualties: they discovered IEDs and booby traps "planted in the walls … targeting troops in an area [where] they would normally 'stack' prior to entry"; in these conditions, Pte Robert McLean of 3 Scots was killed by an anti-tank mine triggered by an antipersonnel mine. Sergeant Joseph Ranger, working as a mentor with the Afghan recon company, came under serious mortar fire after landing. The Afghan troops took several casualties, but Sergeant Ranger and the Afghans were able to lay down heavy suppressive fire. With mortars still falling, he organized a casualty collection point and secured it while the Afghans and other mentors drove back the enemy so that the MEDEVAC could get in. Sgt Ranger was awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.

The Canadian helicopters resupplied the force at night while the Scots patrolled aggressively around the clock. When a 3 Scots platoon came under sniper fire from a compound of interest, a fire mission using an M982 Excalibur extended-range guided artillery shell was authorized, and it took out a four-man insurgent team. At 0200 hours on 15 June, Operation TORA ARWA ended with the withdrawal of the coalition force by Canadian helicopters. The after-action assessment concluded that the TORA ARWA force had dropped into the middle of an insurgent staging area.[368]

After TORA ARWA, there remained a whole host of issues regarding the district police and their chief. Reports of extortion and intimidation against contractors could not be staunched. And, to make matters worse, the Pashmul South police station was engaged daily. As these were unmentored police, it was impossible to use Canadian artillery to support them while they were in contact. On one occasion 2nd Kandak conducted an uncoordinated operation in the area, which confused matters further. Pashmul continued to heat up again as rocket attacks increased against FOB Ma'Sum Ghar. One night an enemy mortar joined in. The M-777 battery was active and, using counter-mortar radar and HALO to spot the firing positions, Batterie X pumped out nearly forty 155mm rounds to suppress the indirect fire.[369]

The insurgents applied pressure on Howz-e Madad at the same time. The number of ambushes against civilian convoys jumped again east of the strong point, so LCol Paul had B Company initiate Operation KATAKAWAL SANGSAR II to move south from the strong point to the first wadi line, then clear west to east in order to destroy several structures that the enemy were using as fire bases for the ambushes. KATAKAWAL SANGSAR II escalated from a routine sweep and clear into a series of serious engagements on 22 June. B Company dismounted and moved east and south, while Canadian electronic warfare

teams jammed enemy communications. When the jam was lifted the enemy reacted with ambush teams. B Company's lead platoon was engaged and they responded by calling in artillery. While this was happening a second enemy force engaged the rear of the company: the guns were re-laid and fired onto them. When a third enemy team opened up to the front, the artillery adjusted again with similar results. As B Company changed direction, they stumbled across two IEDs, which were destroyed. CH-146 Griffons were also able to engage enemy fighters with their Gatling guns. As the Canadians were returning to Howz-e Madad, an Afghan platoon patrolling south of the strongpoint was hit with a suicide bomber, killing three and wounding seven. As the Canadian quick reaction force deployed from Patrol Base Wilson, its lead LAV III was taken out with a command wire IED. The blast was large enough to produce a gap 10 meters wide and 3 meters deep. Analysis indicated that the insurgents "have modified their method of installing IEDs by digging tunnels deep enough that current detection methods are ineffective."[370]

Operation TORA ARWA II was designed to clear out Sia Choy and disrupt the indirect fire that was originating from that area. In this case, B Company, an Afghan company and Canadian mentors were inserted by the Canadian Helicopter Force at 0400 hours on 28 June. As in previous operations an enemy command node situated in a compound of interest was targeted with six GBU-38 bombs dropped from a B-1B Lancer to disrupt the enemy while the airmobile lift was in progress: a pair of enemy leaders were apparently caught in the blasts and were killed along with twelve other fighters. Significant caches were uncovered, including a ZPU-1 anti-aircraft gun but there was virtually no contact on the first day. The next day there were several sharp and short engagements where artillery was used by patrols to break contact. Several Canadians were wounded when an RPG detonated near their position.[371]

Elsewhere in Zharey District, chaos reigned. District Chief of Police Bismillah Khan threatened to abandon the sub-stations at Pashmul North and Pashmul South unless coalition forces were stationed there permanently. Local men working for Blue Hackle at FOB Zettelmeyer rioted, which forced the quick-reaction force to deploy until the police could stabilize the situation. BGen Vance was observing American operations in western Zharey when a LAV III in his convoy struck an IED killing Cpl Nicholas Bulger of 3 PPCLI and wounding five others. As if to punctuate events, a IED attack nearly took out LCol Paul's vehicle as it transited down Route SUMMIT. This blast seriously damaged the culvert system and threatened to disrupt agriculture in the area, and led to a confrontation between locals and security forces. The culvert repair contractor refused to fix the site because he claimed that the Zharey police chief wanted 50% of his earnings. CIMIC and the Specialist Engineer Team were called in to resolve the situation.[372]

As a result of the deteriorating situation along Route Summit, the next two iterations of TORA ARWA swept Pashmul and the communities on Summit from 8 July to 10 July. There were no engagements nor were there any cache finds, which surprised B Company. Relations with Bismillah Khan were untenable, but when District Leader Sahardi was asked to remove him, Sahardi claimed that Bismillah was in Kabul for training. And, to make matters worse, the Pashmul North police commander was arrested for sexually abusing his personnel. No work had been done to repair the culverts on Route Summit. In the understatement of the year, CIMIC reported that "a lot of confidence with the Shura members has been lost". The enemy, sensing the disarray at Pashmul North, launched daily and nightly attacks for 72 hours against the station and its personnel.[373]

LCol Paul reported to TF Kandahar on 20 July that "The situation in Zharey is deteriorating. USPI and ANSF are in contact with insurgents on a daily basis on ring road south and on Route Summit. The attacks are occurring within 2 km west, south, and east of FOB Wilson." By the end of July, "the situation around Pashmul North and Pashmul South has progressively become worse and we are seeing Pashmul South attacked approximately every second day. If the insurgents succeed in cutting off Route Summit, they will have effectively cut off B Company from the rest of the battle group and access to the quick-reaction force."[374]

Maywand District Operations, June–July 2009

It was time for 2-2 Infantry to head home, and on 9 June LTC Dan Hurlbut and his staff handed off to LTC Reik Andersen and the 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment (1-12 Infantry). The Canadian CIMIC team assisted the transition through its governance and development contacts. District Leader Haji Obaidullah Bawari was supposed to be replaced, but he remained in office. Bawari had serious problems to discuss with LTC Andersen: the wells in Hutal were drying up, and water was second only to security in district priorities. Indeed, Maywand was plagued with an anti-cell phone campaign much like the one waged in Zharey and Panjwayi, so security was further compromised because citizens could not call the Joint District Coordination Centre.[375]

1-12 Infantry had trouble getting out the gate. Within the first two weeks, the battalion headquarters staff realized that their platoons were not fully manned. Rusted ammunition found on vehicles and in storage had to be cleaned, and lack of spare parts forced a halt to vehicle maintenance. The overworked maintenance platoon did what they could with what they had, but the battalion's Cougar and Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected (MRAP) vehicles — including its MaxxPro MRAP ambulances —were grounded. The Canadians could not help because the MRAP vehicles were incompatible with Canadian equipment.

As it turned out, aggressive driving wore out the axles, and the pace of patrolling had to drop so the maintainers could catch up. By early July, the entire 1-12 Infantry vehicle fleet was at Amber state. The unavailability of the armoured ambulances forced 1-12 Infantry to curtail vehicle patrols and convoys.[376]

1-12 Infantry shifted to dismounted patrols in the vicinity of their tactical infrastructure and started to score some hits. Operation TIGER was a disruption patrol launched into the Mandowzai area. A ScanEagle SUAV spotted a mortar team harassing the 1-12 Infantry FOBs and was able to bring Canadian artillery to bear to take out the insurgent team. Contact was made with a Canadian-mentored Afghan infantry company operating from FOB Pegasus on Highway 1, so a series of joint patrols were arranged. This was followed by Operation LAMRAY ZANG, which brought two 1-12 Infantry companies and the Afghan company to the Maywand-Zharey border to act as a block for TF Kandahar operations in Zharey district.[377]

1-12 Infantry and the CIMIC team worked to overcome Afghan army-police animosity that had been growing in the district under Haji Bawari. People told the CIMIC patrols that Bawari was an absentee leader: "the locals do not see much of the district leadership out in their towns and most of their leadership lives in Kandahar City." In fact, CIMIC reported that "all shuras have been canceled due to lack of district participation." Faced with disarray at the District Coordination Centre, the 1-12 Infantry staff reported, "We will have to find some way to tie Combat Outpost Rath, CIMIC, USAID, PRT, future civilian mentors, Afghan National Police HQ, new district center, and the future agricultural center."[378] At the same time there were reports that local people started shying away from patrols, "a clear deterioration from two months ago." With no PSYOPS capability in Maywand, "we have no other way to pass [information operations] messages other than on foot patrols."[379]

In the absence of competing coalition messaging and accompanying action, the enemy made serious inroads on the psychological front in Maywand throughout July: "Villagers desperately need diesel fuel to get clean water from their wells but refuse to accept it from us out of fear of reprisal." The insurgents assassinated water contractors who supplied 1-12 Infantry infrastructure and, in one case, customers and shopkeepers in the Hutal bazaar refused to help a contractor who had been shot and left there to die. Most of the CIMIC-assisted projects had halted; the gravel for the bazaar, the solar lighting, the schools and clinics — nothing was under way. The surveillance tower in Hutal was out of action, and the insurgents' boldness was blamed on the lack of coverage.[380]

Crippled by broken-down equipment and with no foreseeable relief, 1-12 Infantry continued to push out dismounted patrols, and the villages around Combat Outpost Terminator were responsive. Quite correctly, 1-12 Infantry opted for more traditional CIMIC solutions to local force-protection problems while also trying to spur economic

development — for example, "putting more money in the pockets of locals and working a system where everyone is harvesting or planting crops 365 days a year." Another potential solution was a convoy bypass around the Hutal bazaar so the vehicles would not become canalized and subject to IED attack as they exited west out of town. LTC Andersen pushed for completion of the New District Centre so that there was at least a symbol of governance in preparation for a new district administrative staff that has not yet materialized. District Leader Bawari eventually returned from a meeting with President Karzai in Kabul and suddenly agreed to "establish a district council that will share in the decision making in the district."[381] With the national elections looming, the appearance of progress was obviously paramount and 300 community elders packed a Bawari-led shura dealing with the elections process.

The Dawn of Persistent Surveillance

The first steps towards an integrated persistent surveillance system were taken by June but they encountered "serious problems during implementation." Ottawa decided, in May 2009, to lease an Israeli system for six months instead of acquiring an existing and functional American system. To make matters worse, Ottawa refused to allow additional personnel to deploy to TK Kandahar to man the system. When it arrived, the PSS-112 consisted of three pieces: an STS 12000 ground-based radar; a Spider camera; and a SkyStar 300 Aerostat. The system had a range of 5 to 12 kilometers. It was deployed to FOB Wilson as soon as it arrived, but personnel had to be drawn from across the task force to man it. And, as there was no doctrine for its use, the system had to be integrated into the TF Kandahar operations centre and other facilities so that imagery and data could move back and forth. The targeting process at Task Force Kandahar Tactical Operations Centre also had to change. This all took time.[382]

With the American influx came a recce team looking for a site for a Persistent Threat Denial System (PTDS) that Gen McChrystal had ordered deployed over Kandahar City to support both the elections and the incoming American forces. BGen Vance lobbied that the system be deployed to FOB Wilson, but he was overruled; Camp Nathan Smith was the chosen site. Operated by American contractors, the PTDS consisted of a large aerostat equipped with a stabilized high-resolution MX-20 WESCAM system and a HALO-like unattended transient acoustic measurement and signature intelligence system for locating indirect-fire teams. The PTDS was operational by mid-July.[383]

The aerostats and their sensors significantly increased the coalition forces' ability to monitor the road networks and counter IED placement — the more "eyes in the sky", the better. With their arrival, the ISTAR web expanded even further, forcing the insurgency to adapt again and again. In time, no one could imagine insurgents operating like the forces

encountered in 2006 during Operation ZAHAR and Operation MEDUSA. Any build-up of insurgent fighters large enough to be spotted and identified could also be engaged. As a result, Canada ordered persistent surveillance systems in order to create a web across the TFK area of operations. Five PSS-112 systems similar to the one leased from Israel but with an even better surveillance package were deployed and operational by November 2009.[384]

This important technical improvement had a drawback, however. Homeowners near Camp Nathan Smith were dismayed to learn that the balloon had a camera that could see into their compounds, which violated social norms when it came to unveiled women. The insurgents played to these fears and spread rumours that the infidels were spying on men's property. On 28 July, an RPG hit the Camp Nathan Smith aerostat, damaging the envelope. Whether it was fired by an aggrieved local or by an insurgent was never determined.[385]

Photo Credit: Author

The need for 24/7 surveillance in a counterinsurgency and IED-heavy environment produced a 21 century twist on 19th century technology: the tethered balloon. Instead of gondolas and observers, the gas-filled envelopes carried cameras and other sensors. The Canadian Army employed two types in Afghanistan: the Persistent Threat Denial System and the Persistent Surveillance System-112.

Photo Credit: Author

The U.S. Influx and the Kandahar Coordination Program

As we have seen 1-12 Infantry replaced 2-2 Infantry in Maywand, with the incoming American battalion remaining under Task Force Kandahar command. But soon American officers tasked with preparing for the influx into Kandahar Province began appearing unannounced in the battle space, particularly in Arghandab District.[386] Their uncoordinated activities generated confusion about where units would go, and who would hand off to whom and how. At the PRT, the Canadian civilian staffers had similar issues. With little warning, a VIP party including the U.S. Deputy Head of Mission from the U.S. Embassy, the incoming commander of Regional Command (South), the head of USAID in Afghanistan and three U.S. senators descended on them for discussions on relationships between Canadian projects and programs and what the American "civilian surge" wanted to accomplish. Out of these meetings, TF Kandahar reported, the Americans "recognized the Canadian whole-of-government approach along the three lines of operations as well the sacrifices of Canadian soldiers in support of signature projects such as Dahla Dam."[387]

Relief-in-place operations commenced at the end of July with the arrival of the 8th Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment (8-1 Cavalry) from the 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team. A 2 R22eR platoon and a CIMIC team that were in Spin Boldak to support the U.S. Navy Construction Battalion preparing a FOB for 8-1 Cavalry returned to their parent units and, with that, TF Kandahar was done with Spin Boldak. The port of entry on the Afghan-Pakistani border was now an American responsibility.[388]

The 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment (1-17 Infantry), a mechanized infantry battalion from the Stryker Brigade, was scheduled to take over Arghandab District. On 1 August, its command team arrived at the All Source Intelligence Centre for "an exhaustive joint [All Source Intelligence Centre and Kandahar Intelligence Fusion Centre] handover brief to the CO and key members."[389] When the Canadian CIMIC team assigned to Arghandab District informed District Leader Haji Abdul Jabar that a Civil Affairs team from the Stryker Brigade would take over, Jabar "was not happy and seems reluctant to work with U.S. Forces, as [he told the CIMIC team] the U.S. Forces have been allegedly belligerent and disrespectful to the people of Arghandab in the past."[390] Canadian CIMIC also started to hand over Shah Wali Kot District to Civil Affairs in the first week of August.[391]

As of 8 August, the Stryker Brigade was responsible for Spin Boldak, Shorabak, Maruf, Arghistan, Arghandab, Shah Wali Kot, Neish, Mianishin and Khakrez districts in Kandahar Province, splitting the responsibility between 8-1 Cavalry and 1-17 Infantry. The All Source Intelligence Centre reported that "All sharable ASIC data (including geo and imagery) was provided to TF Stryker G2 and each battalion received detailed briefings and a handover package in collaboration with [Kandahar Intelligence Fusion Centre], before moving into their area of operations."[392] Similarly, TF Kandahar engineers gave the Stryker Brigade terabyte after terabyte of geospatial information on the entire province, information painstakingly compiled since 2005. They used hours of plotter time to print the maps, as the Stryker units arrived with no such capability. Having been quickly re-tasked from Iraq to Afghanistan, the Americans arrived with virtually no knowledge of the ground itself and were dependent on Canadian efforts in this area.[393]

Other American units and formations were in-bound. The Afghan Regional Security Integration Command South, the organization that worked with TF Kandahar on Afghan army and policing issues, was replaced with an entire brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division converted into police and army mentors. The 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, reported to Task Force Phoenix, the American-led training and mentoring command in Kabul. One of its units, the 2nd Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, was scheduled to handle tasks in Kandahar Province. Personnel started to flow in during August, and the whole command would be up and running by the end of September.

The 4th Engineer Battalion — Task Force Thor — which consisted of nine Route-Clearance Packages (the equivalent of nine Canadian EROC suites) was already on the ground and taking casualties from IEDs.[394]

In addition to these organizations, a specialized counter-IED task force, TF ODIN, was also deploying to Kandahar province. TF ODIN (Observe, Detect, Identify, Neutralize) was an US Army initiative in Iraq, similar to what TF Kandahar was mounting with Operation DALBOR. Unlike DALBOR, however, TF ODIN had dedicated forces for the counter-IED route protection mission. Alpha Company flew Warrior Alpha UAVs, an upgraded version of Predator called the MQ-1C Grey Eagle. Bravo Company was equipped with several C-12 Cessna aircraft carrying a variety of sensors, including one that "detects change over time in terrain beneath a selected route of flight." TF Odin also accessed U-2 aircraft sensors that "even from 13 miles up. . . can detect small disturbances in the dirt."[395] TF Kandahar welcomed this added aerial surveillance capacity; by the end of August, all three of the CU-170 Herons were grounded and awaiting parts from their Israeli manufacturer.[396] Together, TF Thor and TF Odin significantly enhanced the coalition's ability to keep the highways open in Kandahar and relieved the burden on TF Kandahar's three worn-out EROC suites.

Finally, there was the 97th Military Police Battalion. Gen McChrystal leaned toward assigning them to Kandahar City, but it was unclear how the unit would fit into the command structure or what exactly they would do in the larger scheme of the city security plan. A recce party arrived at Camp Nathan Smith in early August to look at buildings and land.[397]

As with the 97th Military Police Battalion, the command relationship between TF Kandahar and the units of the Stryker Brigade was unclear at first; likewise, relationships between the U.S. government agencies and the PRT remained vague. To deal with this and other potential sources of misunderstanding, the Canada-U.S. Kandahar Coordination Plan was signed on 21 August. BGen Vance and Ken Lewis, the RoCK, signed for Canada, while Frank Ruggiero, the Senior Civilian Representative for Southern Afghanistan, and BGen John Nicholson Jr., the deputy commander of Regional Command (South), signed for the United States.[389]

The purpose of the plan was "to strengthen Afghan ownership of the stabilization of Kandahar Province" through a coherent partnership to meet "Afghan priorities, working through Afghan constructs, fostering Afghan solutions, and building Afghan capacity is essential to the success of our plan." Notably:

> The Plan is linked to Afghan priorities described in, *inter alia*, the Afghanistan Compact and the Afghan National Development Strategy. It is also fully nested within the guidance and direction provided by the NATO-led ISAF in cascading strategic plans and operational documents, including the regional campaign plan for Regional Command (South) and the ISAF counterinsurgency strategy.[399]

Structurally, the Kandahar Coordination Plan created a Kandahar Senior Coordination Team made up of the senior military and civilian representatives so there could be "complementarity in their respective national programs." The RoCK was designated the lead official to interact with Governor and the PRT as "the focal point for coordinating all Canadian and American programming related to governance, rule of law, reconstruction and development in Kandahar." The document recognized both Canadian and American strategic objectives. The Canadian strategic objectives remained the six Cabinet priorities and three signature projects. The American objective was to "Disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaeda, its allies and safe havens in Pakistan and to prevent their return to Pakistan or Afghanistan." From that flowed:

- secure the population;
- extend the writ of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan;
- transition to licit, agricultural-based society;
- develop and secure the border; and
- counter the nexus of narcotics, corruption, insurgency, and criminality.

Militarily, this meant:

> Increase focus on securing the surrounding districts to Kandahar City, allowing the Afghan National Police and Task Force Kandahar the freedom of movement to effectively provide security in this key population centre. In coordination with Task Force Kandahar, increase security on Highway 1 and Highway 4 to enable freedom of movement for the population and to help set the conditions for the expansion of agricultural value chains throughout the region. Build the capacity and capability of the ANP and Afghan Border Police and continue Afghan

> National Army capacity building in order to transition to Afghan lead in provision of security in the south within five years. Increase focus on the border region between Chaman and Weish and interdict the insurgent "jet stream" flowing into Afghanistan.[400]

A new organization, the Regional Platform, would be formed at KAF next to Regional Command (South). Though not created by the Plan, the Regional Platform was conceptually a "super PRT" for American development programming in southern Afghanistan. In addition, the plan also recognized that there would be American District Support Teams deployed. How would all this relate to the PRT?

> The KPRT will be an integrated, bilateral organization with members from Canada and the U.S. coordinating its activities in cooperation with Task Force Kandahar and the USG Regional Platform and supporting District Support Teams. The U.S. will stand up DSTs in Kandahar Province … these DSTs will coordinate operations with the KPRT. To ensure full integration Canada will detail an advisor to at least some of the DSTs … each DST will develop a District Support Plan in collaboration with the KPRT, other U.S. and Canadian elements operating in the district, and multinational partners.[401]

TF Kandahar and the Stryker Brigade would "exercise military command and control in their respective areas with the intent on meeting ISAF and national objectives." ISAF Focus Districts remained in effect for ongoing Shape/Clear/Hold/Build operations (see Operation TOLO, Chapter 4) in Kandahar City, Arghandab, Zharey, Maywand, and Spin Boldak. KANTOLO was acknowledged as the dominant Canadian operational plan, though one could discern traces of the defunct Kandahar Action Plan buried in the new agreement.

The Kandahar Coordination Plan was obviously a compromise document that merely affirmed the facts on the ground: that Canada and the United States had different agendas; that some of those agendas were simpatico; that TF Kandahar and the Stryker Brigade had their own battle spaces; and that reconstruction would be coordinated by the Americans at the district level, and by Canadians at the provincial level. DFAIT and CIDA got what they wanted — the provincial-level involvement and, possibly, influence in the arenas of governance and reconstruction — while TF Kandahar got what it wanted — the counterinsurgency fight in the districts, and the counterterrorism fight in the city. DFAIT and CIDA's fears were addressed and they could go about meeting the demands of the Cabinet priorities and signature projects without having to be concerned about the ongoing war or responding to the vagaries of Joint Task Force Afghanistan.

The Pre-Election Situation: 1–19 August 2009

The districts west of Kandahar City experienced low levels of enemy activity while the Afghans, Canadians, and Americans continued with their framework operations. In Maywand District 1-12 Infantry patrols picked up that "the local nationals were optimistic about the upcoming elections. They said they planned on voting. They did not think that President Karzai was doing a good job protecting the country or preventing corruption."[402] In Zharey, preparations were made to turn the district over to TF 1-12 and reconstitute B Company with the rest of the battle group in Panjwayi district. Strong Point Lakokhel continued to be a focal point for enemy harassing fire. On one occasion the Canadian mentors with the Afghan company in position dropped 24 rounds of 155mm fire on an enemy position and the situation quieted down temporarily. Over in Senjaray, an Afghan patrol was engaged, taking casualties, and a route-clearance team from TF Thor cleared the road. On 1 August, a B Company patrol coming through the area hit an IED that disabled one vehicle. A sweep for secondary devices resulted in another detonation that killed Cpl Christian Bobbitt and Spr Matthieu Allard of the 5e Régiment du Génie de combat.[403]

To set the conditions for future operations in Zharey, 1-12 Infantry supported by the tanks from C Squadron mounted Operation TORA ARWA V to clear compounds of interest in the western part of the district. It was 4 August, the peak of summer, and the heat was intense. The tanks screened along the Arghandab River while 1-12 Infantry moved into the communities to their north. When their task was completed, C Squadron headed back to Ma'Sum Ghar as escort to an Afghan unit accompanied by their own Canadian mentors and a party of American police mentors. On the way, the lead Leopard C1, equipped with rollers, hit a mine or an IED. The blast was so powerful that it lifted the tank, breached its hull, and dropped it 45 degrees off its axis of advance. A three-sided ambush was unleashed, hitting and damaging other vehicles in the convoy. At this point in the action, four men were already wounded.[404] MWO Richard Stacey, the Squadron Sergeant Major, sorted through the confusion as tanks and LAV IIIs engaged the ambush positions and artillery was called in. Stacey organized the recovery and extraction of the stricken vehicles. As the column moved out, an Afghan army Ford Ranger pickup truck hit an IED, killing or wounding all aboard. Stacey organized the treatment and evacuation of those casualties too. C Squadron and the Afghans clawed their way out of the ambushes and finally made it back to Ma'Sum Ghar eight hours later. MWO Stacey received the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.

After TORA ARWA V was completed, 1-12 Infantry left a company in Hutal and FOB Ramrod while the other three companies packed up and headed east. They took most of August to complete the move to FOB Wilson in Zharey, which had been expanded for them by Canadian engineers. To set the insurgents back on their heels, two companies

of Afghan infantry with Canadian mentors teamed up on 15 August with B Company to conduct Operation KATAKAWAL LAKOKHEL, beginning with an ISTAR survey of the area and artillery bombardment of compounds suspected of housing enemy activity. A huge cache of homemade explosives totalling hundreds of pounds was discovered and destroyed during the operation.[405]

The dominant issue in Panjwayi throughout early August remained District Leader Haji Baran and his ability to govern. The Route Hyena Paving Project, now in the hands of Bennet-Fouch protected by Blue Hackle and monitored by the Construction Management Organization, was subject to "rising tensions" between all three stakeholders and Haji Baran. Bennett-Fouch then abruptly pulled out of the project and refused to have anything more to do with Baran. The Construction Management Organization decided to suspend the project. Baran "was very distraught" and "at a loss of what he was going to tell the people of Panjwayi." CIMIC was seriously worried: "the real concern is the approximately 300–400 locally employed persons who are now unemployed." Furthermore, "[t]he withdrawal of [Bennett-Fouch] has left the Hyena Paving Project in a precarious position. The 300–400 employees from the site have been laid off which is a cause for concern as to what their future activities might be." CIMIC and the Construction Management Organization hoped to mount a new project after Ramadan, knowing that hundreds of disaffected, unemployed, fighting-age males was a Taliban recruiter's dream.[406] The governance situation in Panjwayi was so bad that none of the District Development Assembly members showed up for a shura on 12 August, leaving the CIMIC team and the representative of the Central Asian Development Group to drink tea with Haji Baran.[407] Meanwhile, C Company launched a search operation in some compounds near Chalghowr, found nothing, and hit an IED. There were no casualties.

In Kandahar City, the OCC-P continued to expand and remained the focal point for security operations in the city. There were indicators that another assault on Sarposa Prison was planned and, with a full moon in the offing, Stab A increased patrols to the site. On 2 August, a 30-man joint patrol (with P-OMLT accompanying) got into a major firefight in District 6, a shoot-out that escalated when the insurgents started to lob mortar bombs, and Stab A responded with 25-mm cannon fire from its LAV IIIs. A return patrol confirmed that the local population was uninterested in cooperating with government forces. Another joint patrol ran across a group of armed anti-Taliban ex-*mujahideen* who took care of their own neighbourhood and its people; their school was in operation. However, on 12 August, Police Sub-Station 8 was engaged by long-range heavy machine gun fire. An OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopter was vectored onto the firing position, while American-mentored police manoeuvred to seize the insurgents, who disappeared into the built-up area.[408]

By 30 July, the Independent Electoral Commission had opened 223 polling stations in Kandahar Province, and this total eventually rose to 262. Only three districts — Khakrez, Mianishin and Ghorak — had no polling stations open.[409] UNAMA was "impressed with the amount of campaigning under way in Kandahar City, which has taken multiple forms including large public rallies and one-on-one engagements."[410] Security planning for the elections, Operation ENTEXAB (Elections), continued behind the scenes. One complicating factor was an orchestrated Taliban information operation personally authorized by Mullah Omar[411] which produced propaganda posters that threatened, "Don't vote as you may die during election day!" The Taliban confiscated voter registration cards in Zharey District, and night letters appeared at mosques in the city.[412]

Canadian CIMIC reports suggested that

> [T]he insurgents' information operations campaign has been effective; local nationals are reporting that they are frightened of insurgent reprisals should they participate in the vote. Local nationals not only believe that CF/ISAF will not be able to protect them on election day but that local nationals will be even more vulnerable to insurgent retaliation in the days after the election once [the security forces] leave the area … It is assessed that the insurgents will not have to use direct kinetic effects to deter local nationals from voting.[413]

There were threats from within as well. A woman leading a group of tribal elders approached the OCC-P on 19 August to complain that the ballot boxes were already full before voting occurred. The complaint was passed to the Independent Electoral Commission.[414]

On the eve of the election, the insurgents mounted simultaneous indirect fire attacks on FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, FOB Wilson, Ghundy Ghar, Kandahar Air Field, Strong Point Howz-e Madad, Pulchakan, Senjaray and Spin Pir. Then they hit Kandahar City with mortars and rockets. Indicators suggested that the enemy was massing in Arghandab District near Sarposa Prison. Without Canadian prompting, BGen Basir and his police counterparts met at the OCC-P and planned an operation into the community of Char Bagh, where the mortar fire originated. A company of Afghan infantry with 100 police and NDS officers plus Canadian mentors moved in on Char Bagh while the PRT Quick Reaction Force covered the prison. Canadian UAVs, the aerostat at Camp Nathan Smith, and American OH-58D helicopters provided the air support. TF 1-17 from the Stryker Brigade handled the blocks to the north. The Afghan security forces captured 17 insurgents, but took two wounded in the course of the operation.[415]

On Election Day, the Canadian security assessment noted that

> It is believed that the insurgents did not achieve their intent and in fact have incurred a major IO loss. Both Dand and Spin Boldak were commented on as a huge success and it was reported that many Afghans crossed the border from Pakistan in order to vote. Combining the total number of SIGACTs in Kandahar Province (TFK + TF Stryker) accounts for more than half the overall number of SIGACTS for all of RC (South) … most SIGACTs had minimal impact on local national population and good level of degradation of the insurgents took place … it was the ANSF who were the busiest and they proved themselves to be quite capable.[416]

Furthermore:

> On 20 August the Afghan Presidential and Provincial Council elections were held. These were the second national elections in decades, however the first to be Afghan-led. Afghan National Security Force performance was above expectations and there was no need for ISAF to assist the ANSF within the TFK area of operations … the ANSF took the lead in securing elections facilities. The level of coordination among various ANSF organizations with ISAF forces was exceptional. Overall, the insurgency failed to significantly disrupt the electoral process … not one suicide IED went off in Kandahar City.[417]

But not all was well:

> There are indications that fewer voters than expected participated in the south. If true, this would further complicate political calculations in the coming weeks, particularly if no single presidential contender emerges with 50 percent of the popular vote.[418]

The legitimacy of the Karzai government was about to come under attack. Without a legitimate government in place, success in a counterinsurgency campaign became all the more difficult. Mohammad Hanif Atmar, the Interior Minister of Afghanistan, told Gen McChrystal, "If the elections fail … I would recommend that the international community not waste any more blood or treasure here."[419]

ENDNOTES

1. Interview with BGen Jon Vance (Edmonton, 8 February 2010).
2. Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2010), pages 3–8.
3. David E. Sanger, *The Inheritance: The World Obama Confronts and the Challenges to American Power* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2009), pages 117–118. See also Stanley McChrystal, *My Share of the Task: A Memoir* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013), pages 283–287.
4. Cowper-Coles, *Cables from Kabul* (Harper Collins, 2012), Chapters 8 and 10. See also Kai Eide, *Power Struggle Over Afghanistan* (Skyhorse Publishing, 2012), Chapter 6.
5. Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, pages 34, 43–44.
6. *Ibid.*, pages 67–69.
7. *Ibid.*, pages 96–98; See also Michael Hastings, *The Operators: The Wild and Terrifying Inside Story of America's War in Afghanistan* (Plume, 2012).
8. One merely needs to peruse Hastings' *The Operators*, Woodward's *Obama's Wars*, Sanger's *The Inheritance and Confront and Conceal* (Crown/Archetype, 2012), Cowper-Coles' *Cables From Kabul* and Eides' *Power Struggle Over Afghanistan* to get a sense of the chaos and confusion that infused the policy process..
9. Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, Chapter 10; Sanger, *Confront and Conceal*, pages16–20; Hastings, *The Operators*, Chapter 14.
10. Report to Parliament, "Canada's Engagement in Afghanistan: December 2008," page 2.
11. CBC, "Foreign Troops Can't Defeat Afghanistan's Insurgency" (1 March 2009).
12. The author was present at both an American headquarters and a coalition headquarters in the Kabul region when this quote was rebroadcast over several media. There was palpable disdain exhibited by allied personnel. One senior Canadian officer I interviewed said that he believed the Harper government had already given up on the war in 2008 and that this remark was a *faux* pas but, nonetheless, confirmatory evidence. DFAIT personnel in Afghanistan informed the author at the time that the Prime Minister's statement was "carefully calculated" but did not elaborate further.
13. Darcy Heddon, "Keeping Promises and Fostering Hope for the Future in Kandahar, Afghanistan," MA Thesis (Royal Roads University, 2011), page 34.
14. Telephone interview with LCol Lee Hammond (10 July 2012).
15. JTF A HQ briefing, "Operations in Afghanistan: How We Did It February–November 2009," see "Operational Planning Challenge" slide.
16. McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, pages 322–326.
17. Discussions with Canadian staff officers serving in the McChrystal ISAF headquarters.
18. Telephone interview with LCol Mike Gilmore (15 October 2012).
19. Briefing, "OMLT 1–09 Roto 7."
20. Interview with Col Gregory Burt (Kingston, 18 September 2012). See also briefing, "OMLT 1–09 Roto 7."
21. "OMLT Roto 7 briefing" (30 April 2010).
22. Burt interview.
23. *Ibid*. "OMLT Roto 7 briefing" (30 April 2010).

24. Burt interview.
25. *Ibid*.
26. *Ibid*.
27. "OMLT Roto 7 briefing" (30 April 2010).
28. Gilmore interview.
29. JTF A HQ Air Wing briefing to the author (Kandahar Air Field, 8 March 2009).
30. Air Wing DSRs (February and March 2009).
31. Air Wing briefing to the author (Kandahar Air Field, 28 July 2010).
32. *Ibid*.
33. As discussed in Maloney, *Confronting the Chaos* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2009), pages 229–233.
34. Air Mapping Unit War Diary (April to July 2009). My thanks to Capt Dan Arsenault for providing information on Operation APPLANIX.
35. Interview with LCol Carl Turenne (Kingston, 15 April 2010).
36. Turenne interview.
37. *Ibid*.
38. *Ibid*.
39. *Ibid*.
40. Author's discussions with PRT personnel (July 2010).
41. Distilled from PRT DSRs (February 2009).
42. PRT DSR (3 April 2009).
43. JTF A HQ DSR (12 March 2009).
44. Eide, *Power Struggle for Afghanistan*, page 10.
45. TF Kandahar briefing to the author (Edmonton, December 2008).
46. Interview with Capt Darcy Heddon (Ottawa, 25 October 2012).
47. *Ibid*.
48. Interview with BGen Jon Vance (Edmonton, 10 February 2010).
49. Discussions between the author and BGen Jon Vance (Edmonton, 23 June 2008).
50. *Ibid*.
51. Vance interview.
52. Hammond interview. See also email correspondence, Hammond to Maloney (18 July 2012).
53. Author's observations.
54. Hammond interview; See also email correspondence, Hammond to Maloney.
55. The author participated in CEFCOM's deliberations on these issues in November 2008.
56. *Ibid*.

57. *Ibid*. See also CEFCOM J5 Draft, "Commander's Intent for the Comd CEFCOM Directive for Conduct of Military Operations in Afghanistan: 2009–2011," (n/d).
58. *Ibid*.
59. Confidential interview.
60. Briefing to the author by BGen Vance (Kandahar Air Field, 8 March 2009).
61. *Ibid*. The author attended ancillary meetings and discussions when GRIZZLY was cancelled.
62. The author attended ancillary meetings and discussions when GRIZZLY was cancelled.
63. Vance interview (10 February 2010).
64. Heddon interview.
65. Telephone interview with LCol Mike Patrick (17 October 2012).
66. *Ibid*.
67. *Ibid*.
68. *Ibid*.
69. See Robert Hossal's media chronology, "Talking with the Taliban: A Timeline" at www.smartwar.org.
70. See James Shinn and James Dobbins, "Afghan Peace Talks: A Primer" RAND Corporation National Security Research Division (2011).
71. *Ibid*., page 14.
72. Interviews with LCol Hugh Ferguson (Kandahar Air Field, 1, 2 and 10 February 2009).
73. JTF A HQ DSR (1 May 2009).
74. JTF A HQ DSR (14 July 2009).
75. JTF A HQ DSR (3 March 2009).
76. JTF A HQ DSR (1 January 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (6 February 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (11 February 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (2 March 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (17 March 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (20 May 2009).
77. Briefing to the author (FOB Hutal, 14 March 2009).
78. JTF A HQ DSRs (3, 7, 13, 17 February 2009, 12–13 and 24 March 2009).
79. JTF A HQ DSRs (4–7, 10 March 2009).
80. JTF–A HQ DSRs (10, 12 February 2009).
81. JTF–A HQ DSRs (13 and 14 February 2009).
82. JTF–A HQ DSRs (13 February, 6, 13 and 15 March 2009).
83. JTF A HQ DSRs (24–29 March 2009).
84. Derived from 3 RCR Battle Group and OMLT DSRs (February 2009).
85. 3 RCR, "Operation SHAHI TANDAR 3" (31 January 2009).
86. Derived from SIGACT slides for Op SHAHI TANDAR 3 and JTF A HQ DSRs (1–2 February 2009).
87. Derived from 3 RCR Battle Group DSRs (8, 10 and 24 February 2009).
88. OMLT DSRs (13–14 February 2009).

89. OMLT DSR, PRT DSR (14 February 2009).
90. 3 RCR Battle Group DSR (19 February 2009).
91. JTF A HQ DSR (21 February 2009).
92. JTF A HQ DSR (4 February 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (16 March 2009).
93. JTF A HQ DSR (19 February 2009).
94. JTF A HQ DSRs (6, 7 and 12 February 2009).
95. The author was present at FOB Ramrod when 2-2 Infantry planned Operation JALEY (13–14 March 2009) and at Kandahar Air Field for the JTF A HQ portion of the planning (15 March 2009).
96. JTF A DSRs (6–8, 15 March 2009).
97. JTF A Air Wing briefing to the author (Kandahar Air Field, 8 March 2009).
98. OMLT DSR (18 March 2009).
99. The author participated in Operation JALEY and recounted his initial observations in "Operation JALEY: An Air-mechanized Assault on Zharey District" in *War in Afghanistan: Eight Battles in the South* (Magic Light Publishing/Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2012), Chapter 13.
100. *Ibid*.
101. The author discussed the perceived reasons for the shutdown with senior JTF A HQ staff (20 March 2009).
102. Message JTF A HQ to CEFCOM (30 March 2009).
103. JTF A DSRs (1–15 February 2009).
104. J2 DSR (17 February 2009).
105. OMLT DSR (27 February 2009).
106. JTF A HQ DSR (15 February 2009).
107. JTF A HQ DSR (24 February 2009).
108. Battle group DSRs (28 February–2 March 2009).
109. JTF A HQ DSR (18 February 2009); OMLT DSR (19 February 2009); CIMIC report to PRT (9 March 2009); CIMIC report to PRT (11 March 2009); CIMIC report to PRT (13 March 2009); P OMLT and CIMIC report to PRT (16 March 2009).
110. JTF A HQ Monthly Assessment Report (February 2009)
111. JTF A HQ DSR (5 March 2009).
112. PRT CIMIC DSR (11 February 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (12 February 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (31 March 2009).
113. The author spent several days with the CMO and CMT-1 on the Fosters paving project (February 2009).
114. JTF A HQ Monthly Assessment Report (February 2009).
115. PRT DSR (2 March 2009).
116. CIMIC report from C/S 55: Arghandab (9 March 2009).
117. PRT DSR (3 February 2009).
118. JTF A HQ DSR (3 March 2009).
119. JTF A HQ DSR (1 March 2009).

120. JTF A HQ DSR (6 March 2009).
121. JTF A HQ DSR (21 March 2009)
122. SIGACT reports "USPMT IED Strike IVO FOB Frontenac" and "BG IED Strike" (25 February 2009).
123. JTF A HQ DSR (9 March 2009).
124. JTF A HQ DSR (11 March 2009).
125. SIGACT report "Griffon Engaged with SAF West of Kandahar City" (17 March 2009).
126. Battle group DSR (24 March 2009).
127. Battle group DSRs (24–26 March 2009).
128. JTF A HQ DSR (5 February 2009).
129. JTF A HQ DSR (16 February 2009).
130. OCC-P DSR. Though the OCC-P did not come out and say it, the implication was that the voter registration centre could have been shut down by an individual connected to Ahmad Wali Karzai as part of an effort to reduce the number of registered voters who might vote against President Hamid Karzai in the upcoming elections, as opposed to insurgent action to interfere with voter registration. There was no proof, however, so the OCC-P did not elaborate further (4 February 2009).
131. The author had just arrived at JTF A HQ and was preparing to deploy to Camp Nathan Smith when the THREATWARN came in.
132. JTF A Air Wing briefing to the author (Kandahar Air Field, 8 March 2009).
133. JTF A HQ DSRs (5–15 February 2009).
134. JTF A HQ DSRs (6 and 8 February 2009).
135. OCC-P DSR (16 March 2009).
136. OMLT DSR (30 March 2009); JTF A DSR (31 March 2009).
137. PRT DSR (9 February 2009).
138. PRT DSR (12 February 2009).
139. Briefing to the author (Camp Nathan Smith, 17 July 2010).
140. *Ibid*.
141. *Ibid*.
142. This experience was not always an asset. Like the British and their Northern Ireland experience, it could be a barrier mindset that misread local Afghan requirements.
143. Vance interview.
144. Confidential interview.
145. Hammond interview. Innis correspondence.
146. WikiLeaks message US Embassy Ottawa to State, "Canadians Prepare for Meetings in Kabul and London" (9 March 2009).
147. WikiLeaks message US Embassy Ottawa to State, "Canada Welcomes Additional US Troops in Afghanistan, Expresses Concern About Civ-Mil Coordination" (3 March 2009).

148. JTF A HQ, “Chief of Plans Update Briefing to Commander TFK” (6 May 2009).
149. WikiLeaks message US Embassy Kabul to State, “Canadian Embassy Seeks Enhanced Civilian Cooperation in Kandahar” (12 March 2009).
150. JTF A HQ, “CHOPS Presentation to Minister of National Defence: Kandahar City Approaches” (May 2009); JTF A HQ briefing slide, Afghan National Army/OMLT locations (15 May 2009); JTF A HQ “TF 3-08–TF 1-09 Relief in Place Briefings” (May 2009).
151. Patrick interview.
152. JTF–A HQ, “TF 3–08-TF 1–09 Relief in Place Briefings” (May 2009).
153. Interview with Col Jocelyn Paul (Kingston, 20 July 2012).
154. Turenne interviews (15 April 2010 and 20 August 2012); Interview with Maj Marc Verret (Ottawa, 6 May 2014).
155. JTF A HQ, “TF 3-08-TF 1-09 Relief in Place Briefings” (May 2009).
156. Eide, Power Struggle over Afghanistan, Chapter 8.
157. Interview with Capt Mike Gaber (Edmonton, 11 July 2012).
158. *Ibid*.
159. *Ibid*.
160. *Ibid*.
161. *Ibid*.
162. Briefing by NSE commander, LCol Ann-Marie Tardif, “Element de Soutien National, Force Operationnelle Afghanistan, 9 December 2009”; “Préparé pour Ex BASTION ERUDIT, 19 November 2009.”
163. *Ibid*.
164. Interview with LCol Mike Gilmore (15 October 2012).
165. Tardif Briefing; “Préparé pour Ex BASTION ERUDIT, 19 November 2009.”
166. TFK MAR Match, 2009.
167. Discussion with Maj David Keehn (Kandahar Air Field, 8 March 2009).
168. *Ibid*.
169. *Ibid*.
170. JTF A HQ DSR (13 March 2009).
171. JTF A HQ Briefing, “TFK C-IED Process, November 2009.”
172. Maj Kevin Barry PSS notes to the author.
173. “US Army to Deploy Lockheed Martin Aerostat Surveillance Systems in Iraq,” UAV News www.spacedaily.com (16 February 2004); Christopher Bolkcom, *CRS Report for Congress, Potential Military Use of Airships and Aerostats* (1 September 2006); JTF A HQ briefing, “Persistent Surveillance System (PSS) CONOP.”
174. JTF A HQ DSR (3 March 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (30 May 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (23 June 2009); C-IED briefings to the author (Kandahar Air Field, 8 February 2009).
175. JTF A HQ DSR (1 April 2009).
176. JTF A HQ DSR (7 June 2009).

177. JTF A HQ DSR (25 March 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (12 June 2009); Author's discussion with personnel on patrol in Nejat, Panjwayi District (May 2011).
178. Gilmore interview.
179. JTF A HQ DSR (10 June 2009).
180. Vance interview.
181. Turenne interview.
182. Confidential interview.
183. Vance interview.
184. Heddon interview.
185. *Ibid*.
186. Correspondence with Patrick Ulrich (22 August 2012).
187. *Ibid*.
188. Interview with BGen Jon Vance (Kandahar Air Field, 8 March 2009). The author encountered a similar problem in Wardak Province at this time.
189. Confidential interview.
190. Vance interview.
191. Heddon interview.
192. Derived from JTF A HQ DSRs (February 2009).
193. PRT DSR (18 February 2009).
194. SIGACT report OCC-P, "Intimidation Killing IVO Karizak" (25 March 2009).
195. PRT DSR (8 April 2009).
196. JTF A HQ DSR (10 April 2009).
197. PRT DSR (2 April 2009); PRT DSR (6 April 2009).
198. JTF A HQ DSRs (5, 11, 16 and 19 April 2009).
199. PRT DSR (16 April 2009).
200. JTF A HQ DSR (2 May 2009).
201. PRT DSR (1 April 2009).
202. PRT DSR (7 April 2009).
203. PRT DSR (24 April 2009).
204. PRT DSR (6 April 2009).
205. PRT DSR (17 April 2009).
206. JTF A HQ DSR (15 April 2009).
207. OMLT DSR (11 April 2009).
208. Derived from JTF A HQ J2 reporting (April and May 2009).

209. Battle group DSR (10 April 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (11 April 2009).
210. JTF A HQ DSRs (19 and 20 April 2009).
211. PRT DSR (23 April 2009).
212. SIGACT report "OMLT C/S 71D TIC/IED Strike" (29 April 2009).
213. JTF A HQ DSR (5–6 May 2009).
214. JTF A HQ DSR (7–9 May 2009).
215. PRT DSR (13 May 2009).
216. Battle group and OMLT DSRs (15–19 May 2009).
217. Battle group DSR (30 May 2009).
218. PRT DSR (14 April 2009).
219. PRT DSR (15 April 2009).
220. JTF A HQ DSR (9 May 2009).
221. JTF A HQ DSR (30 May 2009).
222. PRT DSR (14 April 2009).
223. JTF A HQ DSR (17 April 2009).
224. JTF A HQ DSR (6 April 2009).
225. SIGACT report, "AUP Imposters at NDC Bazaar" (17 April 2009).
226. JTF A HQ DSR (8 May 2009).
227. PRT DSR (12 May 2009).
228. CIMIC report to PRT (5 April 2009).
229. JTF A HQ DSR (6 April 2009).
230. SIGACT report, "COWBOY 5 Cache Find" (31 March 2009).
231. Battle group DSR; JTF A HQ DSR (4–6 April 2009).
232. Battle group DSR (8 April 2009).
233. SIGACT report, "OMLT C/S 73A TIC IVO Mushan" (8 April 2009).
234. SIGACT report, "OMLT C/S 73A TIC IVO Mushan" (12 April 2009).
235. Paul interview.
236. Battle group DSR, JTF A HQ DSR (24–30 April 2009).
237. Paul interview.
238. Battle group DSR (12 May 2009).
239. Battle group DSR (21 May 2009).
240. SIGACT "BG C/S/ 32 TIC IVO Zangabad." (26 May 2009); Battle group DSR (27 May 2009).
241. PRT DSR (3 April 2008).
242. JTF A HQ DSR (8 May 2009).

243. JTF A HQ DSR (10 April 2009).

244. OCC-P DSR (13 April 2009).

245. PRT DSR (24 April 2009).

246. JTF A HQ DSR (5 April 2009).

247. Telephone interview LCol Jean-François Cauden (19 March 2012). See also briefing, "Armoured Recce Operations in Afghanistan April to October 2009" (30 April 2010).

248. Paul interview.

249. JTF A HQ DSR (15 April 2009).

250. J2 DSRs (16 and 20 April 2009).

251. JTF A HQ DSR (17 April 2009).

252. PRT DSR (8 May 2009).

253. PRT DSR (10 May 2009).

254. JTF A HQ DSR (20 May 2009).

255. JTF A HQ DSR, OCC-P DSR; Bill Roggio, "Taliban kills 13 in suicide assault on Kandahar Government Center" (1 April 2009) http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/04/taliban_kills_13_in.php

256. OCC-P DSRs (10–15 April 2009).

257. JTF A HQ DSR (24 April 2009).

258. The author is aware of several conflicting theories regarding the assassination of Sitara Achakzai. Initially, it was chalked up as a Taliban assassination and exploited as such for information operations purposes because of the larger gender-equality aspects of the incident. However, the author was informed by both Afghan and Canadian sources that Achakzai was in the process of investigating allegations of human trafficking that related to a girls' school and a senior member of the provincial shura.

259. PRT DSR (18 April 2009).

260. JTF A HQ DSR (26 April 2009).

261. OCC-P DSR (29 April 2009).

262. Report from STAB A (30 April 2009).

263. JTF A HQ DSRs, OMLT DSRs, OCC-P DSRs (1–6 May 2009).

264. JTF A HQ DSR (10 May 2009).

265. JTF A HQ DSR (11 May 2009).

266. PRT DSR (15 May 2009).

267. PRT DSR (17 May 2009).

268. JTF A HQ DSRs (23 and 27 May 2009).

269. PRT DSR (24 May 2009).

270. Hammond interview.

271. Darcy Heddon, "Keeping Promises and Fostering Hope for the Future in Kandahar, Afghanistan," MA Thesis (Royal Roads University, 2011), page 28.

272. Note also that Barakzai former governor Gul Agha Sherzai was a possible contender for Hamid Karzai's presidency in the 2009 elections. Empowering the Barakzai in Dand had possible spin-off benefits for Canada if he ran and won.
273. PRT DSR (4 June 2009).
274. Vance interview.
275. *Ibid*.
276. *Ibid*.
277. Verret interview; Verret briefing, "Op KALAY: Application of COIN, Summer 2009."
278. Verret interview; Verret briefing, "Op KALAY: Application of COIN, Summer 2009."
279. Verret interview.
280. *Ibid*.
281. JTF A HQ DSRs (1–10 May 2009).
282. JTF A HQ DSRs (11–12 May 2009).
283. JTF A HQ DSRs; Verret interview (20–22 May 2009).
284. JTF A HQ DSRs (23–25 May 2009).
285. Verret interview.
286. *Ibid*.
287. *Ibid*.
288. JTF A HQ DSRs (26–27 May 2009).
289. JTF A HQ DSR (29 May 2009).
290. JTF A HQ DSR (30 May 2009).
291. JTF- A HQ Briefing, "Operations in Afghanistan: How We Did It February – November 2009."
292. JTF- A HQ DSR (2 June 2009).
293. OCC-P DSR, SIGACT report, "ANP TIC at CP Belanday" (13 June 2009).
294. JTF-A HQ DSR (13 June 2009).
295. SIGACT report "Insurgent Attack at Dand ANP CP" (14 June 2009)
296. JTF- A HQ DSR (12-13 June 2009).
297. JTF-A HQ DSR (13 June 2009).
298. Ulrich correspondence.
299. JTF-A HQ DSR (21 June 2009).
300. SIGACT report, "IED Strike IVO Walakan" (23 June 2009).
301. Vance interview.
302. PRT DSR (27 June 2009).
303. PRT DSR (28 June 2009).
304. PRT DSR (10 July 2009).

305. Verret interview; PRT DSR (6 July 2009).
306. JTF A HQ DSR (9 July 2009).
307. PRT DSR (15 July 2009).
308. JTFA HQ DSR (11 July 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (12 July 2009).
309. SIGACT report "SVBIED Strike and TIC at Dand ANA CP" (13 July 2009)
310. SIGACT report "IED Strike in Deh-E Bagh" (24 July 2009); PRT DSR (25 July 2009).
311. JTF-A HQ DSR (27 July 2009).
312. JTF-A HQ DSR (20 July 2009).
313. JTF A HQ DSR (7 August 2009).
314. JTF- A HQ DSR (1 June 2009).
315. PRT DSR (2 June 2009).
316. PRT DSR (4 June 2009).
317. JTF- A HQ DSR (1 June 2009).
318. Paul interview.
319. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 June 2009), SIGACT Report, "ARTY Engagement of INS W/RPG" (4 June 2009)
320. JTF-A HQ DSRs (6-7 June 2009).
321. JTF A HQ DSR (8 June 2009).
322. JTF A HQ DSR (9 June 2009).
323. JTF A HQ DSR (14 June 2009); SIGACT report, "BG CS 32 IED Strike" (14 June 2009).
324. JTF A GQ DSR (16 June 2009).
325. SIGACT report, "ANA Struck an IED" (16 June 2009); and SIGACT report, "ANP Attack IVO of OP BROWN" (17 June 2009).
326. Battle group DSR (19–20 June 2009).
327. JTF A HQ DSR (19 June 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (18 June 2009).
328. Battle group DSR (24 June 2009).
329. JTF A HQ DSR (19–30 June 2009).
330. JTF A HQ DSR (2 July 2009).
331. PRT DSR (7 July 2009).
332. PRT DSRs (3-11 July 2009).
333. JTF A HQ DSR (19 July 2009).
334. Pocket litter discovered by the 2 PPCLI Battle Group (24 July 2009).
335. PRT DSR (26 June 2009).
336. PRT DSR (12 June 2009).
337. PRT DSR (15 June 2009).

338. PRT DSR (23 June 2009).
339. OMLT DSR (28 June 2009).
340. SIGACT report, "Kandahar City Green on Green." (29 June 2009). See also Gould, Worth Dying For p. 69.
341. OCC-P DSR (30 June 2009).
342. WikiLeaks message American Embassy Kabul to State, "Karzai on the State of US-Afghan Relations," (7 July 2009).
343. Stephen Grey, "Afghan prosecutor issues arrest warrant for U.S. Army officer over police killing" *The Guardian* (16 May 2010).
344. Pajhwok Afghan News, "4 Sentenced to Death in 2009 Kandahar Shooting Case" (23 December 2011).
345. JTF A HQ DSR (7 July 2009).
346. PRT DSRs (15, 16 and 18 June 2009).
347. PRT DSR (8 July 2009).
348. JTF A HQ DSR (24 July 2009).
349. PRT DSR (3 July 2009).
350. JTF A HQ DSR (30 June 2009).
351. PRT DSR (9 July 2009).
352. JTF A HQ DSR (13 March 2009); PRT DSR (1 April 2009).
353. JTF A HQ DSR (9 April 2009).
354. PRT DSR (13 May 2009).
355. Cauden interview.
356. *Ibid*.
357. JTF A HQ DSR (3 June 2009); OCC-P DSR (5 June 2009).
358. OMLT DSR (7 June 2009); JTF A HQ DSR.
359. PRT DSR (10 June 2009).
360. OMLT DSR (9 June 2009); battle group and OMLT DSRs (14 June 2009).
361. JTF A HQ DSR (11 June 2009).
362. PRT DSR (14 June 2009).
363. JTF A HQ DSR (21 June 2009).
364. JTF A HQ DSR (9 July 2009).
365. JTF A HQ DSR (23 July 2009).
366. PRT DSR (1 June 2009); PRT DSR (6 June 2009).
367. JTF A HQ DSRs (9–10 June 2009).
368. JTF A HQ DSRs (10–15 June 2009).
369. JTF A HQ DSRs (15–20 June 2009).
370. JTF A HQ DSRs (22–23 June 2009).

371. Battle group DSR (28 June 2009).
372. JTF A HQ DSRs (1–7 July 2009).
373. JTF A HQ DSRs (16–18 July 2009); PRT DSR (18 July 2009).
374. JTF A HQ DSR (24 July 2009).
375. PRT DSRs (7–8 June 2009).
376. JTF A HQ DSRs (24 and 26 June 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (11 July 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (12 July 2009).
377. JTF A HQ DSRs (26–27 June 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (1 July 2009).
378. JTF A HQ DSRs (10–11 July 2009).
379. PRT DSR (11 July 2009).
380. JTF A HQ DSRs (12–15 July 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (18 July 2009); JTF A HQ DSR (22 July 2009).
381. JTF A HQ DSRs (24–30 July 2009).
382. JTF A HQ briefing, "Persistent Surveillance System (PSS) CONOP" (6 June 2009).
383. TFK briefing, "Persistent Target Detection System (PTDS) TFK CONOP" (3 July 2009).
384. Barry notes to the author on PSS/PTDS.
385. OCC-P DSR (2 August 2009).
386. JTF A HQ DSR (12 May 2009).
387. JTF A HQ DSR (27 May 2009).
388. JTF A HQ DSR (25 July 2009).
389. JTF A HQ DSR (1 August 2009).
390. PRT DSR (3 August 2009).
391. PRT DSR (4 August 2009).
392. JTF A HQ DSR (10 August 2009). The allegations in Rajiv Chandrasekaran's book *Little America* (New York: Vintage, 2012), pages 155–157, that Canada did not provide substantial or accurate intelligence information to incoming American forces are, in my opinion, inaccurate.
393. Gilmore interview.
394. JTF A HQ WSR (24–30 July 2009).
395. "The Dragon Lady Lives On (23 March 2010); Nathan Hodge, "Army Killer Drone Takes First Shots in Combat" (5 March 2009); A.T. Ball and Berrien T. McCutcheon, "Task Force ODIN Using Innovative Technology to Support Ground Forces," www.dvidshub.net/news (20 September 2009).
396. JTF A HQ WSR (21–27 August 2009).
397. JTF A HQ WSR (7-13 August 2009); JTF A HQ WSR (14–20 August 2009).
398. "A Common Mission: The Canada-US Kandahar Coordination Plan" (21 August 2009).
399. *Ibid*.
400. *Ibid*.
401. *Ibid*.

402. JTF A HQ DSR (16 August 2009).
403. SIGACT report (1 August 2009); SIGACT report "C/S 22 IED Strike" (2 August 2009).
404. JTF A HQ SIGACT report "BG C/S T32B Ambush During Op TORA ARWA V" (4 August 2009).
405. Battle group DSR (17 August 2009).
406. PRT DSRs (2–7 August 2009).
407. PRT DSR (13 August 2009).
408. PRT DSRs (1–15 August 2009).
409. JTF A HQ WSR (24–30 July 2009).
410. JTF A HQ WSR (31 July–6 August 2009).
411. JTF A HQ DSR (19 August 2009).
412. JTF A HQ DSR (18 August 2009).
413. JTF A HQ DSR (16 August 2009).
414. OCC-P DSR (20 August 2009).
415. JTF A HQ DSRs (18–20 August 2009).
416. JTF A HQ DSR (21 August 2009).
417. JTF A HQ WSR (14–20 August 2009).
418. *Ibid*.
419. McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, page 330.

CHAPTER SIX

BOUNCING OFF THE ROPES:

AUGUST 2009–FEBRUARY 2010

The Aftermath of the 2009 Elections

At the beginning of September 2009, a report from a PRT CIMIC team contained an important warning about the likely future of TF Kandahar – and, in fact, the entire Canadian mission in Afghanistan.

> Callsign 45 drivers were tasked to escort [Independent Electoral Commission] members to the IEC compound located within the Old Corps Headquarters from 2–3 September 2009. C/S 45 was told of numerous cases of corruption in regards to the elections of 20 August 2009. It was reported that, at this point in time, all the ballots for Kandahar City are still located at the IEC and have not yet been sent to Kabul due to the fact that they are under review for possible corruption … It was reported that a lot of the local nationals working for the IEC are corrupt themselves.[1]

The 2009 national elections in Afghanistan were an unmitigated disaster for the Afghans and ultimately a major setback for international efforts in their country. President Karzai had deliberately delayed the entire process earlier in the year for dubious reasons, using dubious processes that could be viewed only as anti-democratic.[2] An accurate voter's list still did not exist, even though one was mandated by the Bonn Agreement of 2001. This deficiency in turn affected the voter registration process. There was a lack of prepared and trained polling staff. Problematic security in some districts meant that voter education prior to the election could not take place.[3] Worse, the campaign and the vote were set for the middle of the summer fighting season — never a good time in Afghanistan. British Ambassador Sherard Cowper-Coles summed up in retrospect:

> Thanks to ambiguities in the Afghan constitution, no one knew exactly when [the elections] had to be held, or when exactly President Karzai's five-year mandate ran out. More important, there were deeply divided views on whether security conditions in the south and east would allow a credible election to be held. But money had been raised, and a UN election team formed.

> After all, people reasoned, elections and democracy were what we were in Afghanistan for. If, after seven years, we couldn't hold elections, what had we really achieved? The elections had somehow to go ahead.[4]

Moreover, the Canadian government had put up $35 million as part of a "coordinated multi-donor effort led by the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan," and was leading the charge.[5] Touted as the "first Afghan-run election", especially after irregularities were detected, this proved to be polite fiction, as one independent report noted:

> UNAMA, through the United Nations Development Program's Enhanced Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow (UNDP-ELECT) programme, was heavily involved in planning, preparations, and logistics. The international community was thus perceived by Afghans as an active participant in the flawed process.[6]

There was, however, a larger game in play related to Karzai's attempts to reach an accommodation with the Taliban earlier in the year, which in turn related to Karzai's attempts to strengthen his ethnic power base. Recall in Volume I that Karzai was initially an appointed leader, with virtually no power in Kabul, subject to the whims of power brokers like Fahim Khan, Abdul Rasool Sayyaf, Rashid Dostum and the others. Karzai was able to flourish while the international community, led by Canada, held back the power brokers, dismantled their armies, and assisted in assimilating them in the democratic process in 2004. This gave Karzai, and particularly the Popalzai Pashtuns, a chance to enhance their power base throughout Afghanistan which, as we have seen, they were doing in the south by at least 2007 and probably earlier. (see Volume II, chapters 2 and 3).

When he put out peace feelers to the Taliban in 2009, Karzai likely wanted them to back off and may have been willing to accommodate them by compromising on issues like the role of women in Afghan society. This possibility alarmed numerous observers who saw that there was a very real potential that Karzai might roll back post-Taliban gains in Afghan society in order to keep power. Other entities who were equally alarmed included those who profiting from trucking, transport, and development agency construction contracts that would dry up if the war ended. The only power faction that appeared not to be alarmed were those involved in the narcotics trade: they had a demonstrated ability to work with whoever was in power, including the Taliban.

Photo Credit: Author

Political legitimacy was the goal of both pro- and anti-government forces in Afghanistan. Provision or denial of government services was the means by which that goal could be achieved. Consequently, promoting voter registration and participation in elections was a key element of the fight for Afghanistan.

At the same time, Karzai tried to draw in his old opponent Mohammad Qasim Fahim by offering him the vice-presidency. That move alarmed those who had fought in 2003 and 2004 to reduce friction between the ethnic power-brokers and stave off another civil war. Abdul Rashid Dostum even returned from exile in Turkey with no repercussions from Karzai, who used him to get Uzbek votes.[7] There was substantial media outcry in the West over Karzai's accommodation of these ostensible villains.[8] Elements in the US State Department, led by Richard Holbrooke who was equally concerned at these moves, worked behind the scenes to ensure that there were other contenders for the 2009 election in addition to Karzai. Karzai got wind of these manoeuvres and his relationship with the United States eroded.[9] That in turn contributed to his inflexibility on election issues.

For several weeks after the polls closed, the Independent Elections Commission (appointed by Karzai) did not report a clear result, but it looked like Karzai did not receive the 50 percent of the vote required to declare victory. This lack of resolution led to a period of serious instability from August to November. When the lead contender, Dr. Abdullah, charged the elections as fraudulent, and he turned out to be right: 1.3 million ballots,

or more than 25 percent of the votes cast, had been thrown out.[10] A run-off election was necessary, but the anti-Karzai candidates seemed likely to boycott it. This protracted and very public procedural debate severely undermined the legitimacy of Karzai's rule and international confidence in him:

> The head of UNAMA's [Kai Eide's] failure to take decisive corrective action when evidence of fraud surfaced has badly damaged the UN's standing in the country … Karzai's retention of power under these circumstances has bolstered the impression that the international community is disinterested or incapable of checking the corruption that has metastasized under his watch. The electoral fraud was a direct consequence of failure to build the capacity of government institutions. Since the 2004 presidential vote, the international community — UNAMA in particular — repeatedly turned a blind eye to the looming crisis of credibility rooted in unsound process … the polls severely damaged UNAMA's ability to function effectively, weakening its internal morale and sharply eroding Afghan confidence in Kai Eide … the UN's mission to bring stability to the country has been severely jeopardized.[11]

As for the election in Kandahar Province, the numbers were revealing. Of 912,778 eligible voters, only 252,866 (or 27 percent) voted. Of the eligible voters, 221,436 (or 24 percent) voted for Karzai. The voter turnout was one of the lowest in Afghanistan,[12] and it compared unfavourably with the 70 percent turnout achieved in 2004. The pattern of voting by selected district was also revealing. In districts with little or no security presence, such as Arghistan, Maruf, Nesh and Khakrez, close to 100 percent of the vote went to Karzai. In insurgent-dominated Zharey District, 24,085 votes were cast and 22,196 were for Karzai. In Panjwayi, 11,130 of the 13,905 votes cast went to Karzai. In Arghandab, it was 13,615 out of 15,669. Kandahar City, with a population of nearly one million, had a voter turnout of only 60,204, and 50,618 of the votes cast went to Karzai. Spin Boldak turned out more voters than Kandahar City.[13] (Many observers, including those in the media, did not pick up on the fact that security forces connected to Karzai family members handled security for the UN in Kandahar for years, and that plans were underway for another Karzai relative to provide special militias to handle elections security in insecure districts).[14]

There was simply no way that results like these could give President Karzai a mandate from the people of Kandahar Province, let alone a nation-wide one. Ballot stuffing was the predominant form of fraud and thus an indication of significant preparation, planning and pre-meditation.[15] It could be argued that, in Kandahar, the views and beliefs of the population remained unknown. It was clear, though, that the people had been intimidated out of voting, and they did not buy into the government message; 73 percent of eligible voters were either on the fence, or supported the enemy.

The upshot for the Canadian effort in Kandahar Province was that the government of Afghanistan, at either the national or provincial level, had questionable legitimacy. For Afghans who encountered Canadians on a day-to-day basis, the 2009 elections were the final straw. They did not trust the Karzai government, they especially did not trust the UN, and they were terrorized by the insurgents. It was easier for them to revert to survival mode instead of participating in political processes at the district level. This was the situation laid at TF Kandahar's feet in the fall of 2009.

There was irony in the situation. During the debate over holding a run-off election in November, the highly respected Dr. Sibghatullah Mojaddedi "received a call from someone close to the Taliban who allegedly said that 'we'll be on Karzai's side and keep the disturbances down — just don't negotiate with Abdullah"[16] which referred to the Tajik presidential contender who protested the election process and results based on the obvious and rampant fraud. Serious concerns were also raised over "the growing ethnicized nature of the rhetoric being used to get out the Pashtun vote."[17] And, given the possibility that the Tajiks and others in the north could be aggrieved at Pashtun dominance of the new government, the possibility of a country-wide inter-ethnic war loomed over the Pashtun inter-tribal skirmishes that Canada were observing in the south. Rumours circulated of a possible *coup d'état*, this time led by the Afghan National Army; they continued well into 2010.

The McChrystal Report and Its Impact

While the Karzai government was dissipating, ISAF commander Gen Stanley McChrystal presented the strategy review initiated by the United States and NATO earlier in the summer. Simply put, McChrystal told his audiences that, because current approaches to the insurgency in Afghanistan were "under-resourced" (that is, in numbers of troops and surveillance systems), ISAF had adopted operational methods that were less than compatible with optimal counterinsurgency operations. That approach isolated ISAF troops from the population. When coupled with less-than-perfect Afghan governance at the provincial and district levels, this state of affairs permitted the insurgency to make inroads in exerting control over the Afghan population.[18] The report was expansive on how to address these issues, if ISAF were properly resourced.

Fundamentally, the detailed contents in the McChrystal report was a statement of the obvious and was not new to Canadians who had fought in Kandahar province since 2005. Most of the report's points had already been identified by Laroche, Thompson, Vance and their staffs during their respective rotations. The importance of the McChrystal Report lay in who it was targeted at: the Obama administration, and the NATO-member countries with forces in Afghanistan. Although the Obama administration had agreed to the 17,000-man surge already under way, they still were withholding the additional 30,000 troops and other

resources that McChrystal and his predecessors recommended to be able to implement an effective campaign — pending yet another strategy review. In the NATO realm, there was extensive wavering after the Dutch announced that they would pull out of Oruzgan Province in 2010. The McChrystal Report brought everyone to the same table and forced them to see the situation in stark terms.

To add weight to McChrystal's arguments and to present a unified front, Minister of Defence Abdul Rahim Wardak wrote to the NATO principles and baldly stated: "We have arrived here by virtue of decisions made in the past that underestimated the enemy, failed to identify the true source of the threat, did not create a fully resourced civil-military counterinsurgency campaign plan that failed to deliver good governance and development for the people and that under-resourced the campaign." Success was achievable but only if NATO acted now: "The Taliban lacks strong leadership, popular support, and an ideology that Afghans can embrace. Yet the threat is growing due to its external support and the weakness of our joint efforts." He decried the current discussions about ISAF withdrawal in that "Any wavering of our resolve or suggestion of an exit strategy or deadline for withdrawal would be as Secretary Gates said, a strategic mistake and have catastrophic consequences for us all."[19] It was now make or break time for all of the players in the Afghan drama, NATO, Afghan, UN and NGO.

This was easier said than done, however, because the means to resolve the impass wound up enmeshed in the ongoing American strategy review. This in turn was fed by the 2009 elections issue and questionable legitimacy of the Karzai government. "Resourcing" McChrystal's way ahead was not a done deal. The issue increasingly revolved around what to do about Pakistan and Afghanistan as a single systemic problem, something that was outside of NATO ISAF's purview. The various American schools of thought on the problem by September-October 2009 were:[20]

1. Pakistani safe havens keep the insurgency in Afghanistan going. Until this problem is addressed, do not send any more ground troops. The onus is on Pakistan.

2. The Taliban in Afghanistan do not have to be defeated, they need only be degraded enough so that the Afghan security forces can defeat them.

3. Must the United States defeat the Taliban to defeat Al Qaeda?

4. If the Taliban succeed in Afghanistan, will they take over nuclear-armed Pakistan next?

5. The Taliban should be fought and forced to the table for a political settlement in order to end the war.

Throughout November, the Obama administration thrashed out ways to reconcile these points of view with the McChrystal Report. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates achieved a consensus of sorts that argued that there should be six primary military objectives:[21]

1. reverse the Taliban momentum;

2. deny the Taliban access to and control of key populations and production centres and lines of communication;

3. disrupt the Taliban outside secured areas, and prevent Al Qaeda from regaining sanctuary in Afghanistan;

4. degrade the Taliban to levels manageable by the Afghans;

5. increase the size and capacity of the Afghan security forces; and

6. build the Afghan government, especially in key ministries.

President Obama absorbed this and told his staff, "There needs to be a plan about how we're going to hand it off and get out of Afghanistan … We need to make it clear to people that the cancer is in Pakistan." As a result, the new American strategy in November 2009 consisted of deploying 30,000 more troops, but only until July 2011. Nation-wide counterinsurgency as envisioned by Gen McChrystal and the Afghan Ministry of Defence was not endorsed, nor was "nation-building". Enough "space" was to be cleared and held so the Afghan security forces could be trained to take on the insurgency themselves. The aerial campaign against Al Qaeda in Pakistan was stepped up from Afghan bases, while special operations forces in Afghanistan were to ramp up efforts to take out Taliban leadership targets. The American president concluded that it was too expensive for the United States to engage in long-term counterinsurgency and nation building as "it would break the budget and it would leave the Afghan government more dependent on us." He instructed American military commanders, "Don't clear and hold what you cannot transfer [to the Afghans]. Don't overextend us."[22]

None of this strategizing was designed to answer the troublesome question of Pakistan. American leaders really had no viable solution to that array of problems, so they deferred it once again. The new American strategy, and thus the new NATO strategy under McChrystal, was a compromise of positions. It was designed to throw the Taliban insurgency back on its heels and buy time for the Afghans to sort themselves out politically and militarily before the Americans and others pulled back and out. There was no longer any talk about defeating the insurgency. The key words remained, as they had for the past three years, "disrupt" and "capacity building". The Afghans now had to step up, as there was a deadline: July 2011. There would be no more unqualified support.

In late 2009, the situation of ISAF contingents across Afghanistan mirrored the Canadian experience to date in Kandahar: holding the line and disrupting the insurgency until the Afghans could build up their forces and the Americans could reinforce with enough troops to defend the people. Despite all the heat and light it attracted, the new strategy had little impact at first on the Canadian contingent's activities in their area of operations in Kandahar Province. They already had their withdrawal deadline, and they had implemented most of Gen McChrystal's recommendations well before McChrystal wrote them.

A Faltering Insurgency in Kandahar Province?

Over the course of several years the Taliban established an annual pattern whereby their summer surge forces and senior commanders moved back to Pakistan in the fall while local forces and urban terrorists continued operations to remind the government and ISAF that the insurgency was still viable. For the most part these movements coincided with the reduction of foliage, which made the fighters more susceptible to detection and destruction from the air as the fall progressed into winter. It was also used by the insurgent leadership as a time to psychologically rally their fighters or, as one Canadian officer put it, "to get their jihad face on."

In 2009 it initially looked to TF Kandahar intelligence people as though this pattern was repeating itself but for some reason was starting earlier. This shift was initially chalked up to an earlier start of the Ramadan period. However, ISTAR reportage asserted that Pakistani groups and Afghan groups in Kandahar were openly taunting each other, and the senior Taliban leadership in Quetta issued orders to local insurgents to increase activity during Ramadan. Coalition strikes against insurgent leaders west of Kandahar City also contributed to a leadership breakdown, which exacerbated command and control issues.[23] By the end of September, the assessment was that:

> … the insurgency continues to appear dislocated, with multiple reports of rifts amongst the leadership, lack of clear direction from Quetta, and lack of resources. The insurgency in Kandahar province has yet to return to the pre-Ramadan pace of operations and significant acts are below seasonal norms.[24]

Furthermore, local fighters were disengaging from Dand, Panjwayi, and to a lesser extent Arghandab. Those in Dand headed into the Malajat area, while others moved west into Maywand, where they were protected by District Leader Haji Bawari. Others moved into the Reg Desert south of Panjwayi.[25] Urban terrorism did not stop, but the Afghan security forces reported that "the Joint Patrols in Kandahar City have disrupted the insurgents and … they no longer have freedom of movement."[26] Yet another indicator was the movement of insurgent training camps on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border to points east at the behest of the Pakistani ISI.[27] (see Figure 6-1).

To what extent was this normal activity and to what extent was it not? This question intrigued the TF Kandahar J2 and the ASIC. There were the usual logistics issues — insurgent cells were complaining that they were not getting everything they wanted — but that was not new. The first clue was the forcible removal of the two Taliban commanders responsible for Dand and Panjwayi, Zia Ul Haq and Janan Agha. The infamous Jabar Agha was also disciplined in some fashion by Taliban authorities. The shadow governor of Zharey District was also removed and the dangerous Mullah Zergay moved from Zharey and Senjaray to Dand. It was increasingly evident that the Quetta Shura was not happy with their commanders' failure to reduce the Operation KALAY salient.[28]

Canadian analysts concluded that there were serious fractures developing in the insurgency in Kandahar Province. Local insurgents were increasingly dissatisfied with the effort and expressed this to their leadership in Quetta starting in the summer of 2009. Their issues related to the insurgency's propensity to live off the land. Pashtunwali was regularly employed by the insurgents to garner this support. After three years of attrition, however, there were fewer local fighters and an increased number of outsiders: Pakistani Pashtuns, Afghan refugees, Islamist fighters, Pakistani Taliban and so on. These people abused the hospitality clause of the Pashtunwali tribal code to a greater extent than the local fighters and resentment was building. (To what extent this was assisted by Canadian information operations efforts is difficult to determine).[29]

ISTAR reportage noted that the Quetta Shura was particularly concerned about three specific items. The first was the use of children by insurgent commanders to emplace IEDs. Early in October, three children were killed doing so. The second was an IED attack against a civilian bus in Maywand in late September which resulted in mass casualties. A Taliban

Figure 6-1: Enemy Operations Structure – Eastern Panjwayi District, 2009-2010

delegation travelled from Pakistan to conduct a board of inquiry and recommended that the insurgency stop using pressure plate IEDs against targets on Highway 1. They could still use them in villages if they warned local people where they were located. The third was a rocket attack against a compound that killed five children on 8 October. This was a major sea change: it was the first time the Quetta Shura appears to have been concerned about the negative publicity vis-a-vis killing civilians, especially children.

In fact, an insurgent shura held in Quetta in early to mid-October included Taliban leaders as well as representatives of the Pakistani ISI and delegates from Iran and Saudi Arabia. "One of the topics raised at the Shura was the issue of avoiding the injury of local nationals while conducting operations, in order to improve relations with the population of Afghanistan."[30] For years, Canadian information operations highlighted the indiscriminate nature of terrorism in Kandahar Province, and now the enemy was adjusting to the Canadian narrative. At the same time, however, the shura noted that "the movement had lost the support of local Afghans, who now considered the insurgents to be the enemy."[31]

The insurgent shura reportedly assessed the various ISAF members and their capability. Canadian analysts were proud to report that:

> The final topic raised related to the disparity of how the insurgents viewed ISAF/CF members. Specifically, insurgents in Kandahar Province are to avoid attacking Canadian troops, and only engage in self-defence. The reasoning for this was that Canadian troops are fair, and just want stability in Afghanistan and Canadian troops should be respected for their efforts and not considered infidels like other ISAF members.[32]

The fact that the enemy leadership in Quetta made all of these changes to their approach at once while internally paying tribute to Canadian soldiers leads us to the conclusion that the cumulative effects of three years of operations were starting, just starting, to pay off.[33] Could this sliver of hope prevail in the face of the failed 2009 national elections and the muddled nature of American strategy? That remained unclear. The Quetta Shura re-oriented its operations towards undermining security in Kandahar City and away from district operations for the rest of 2009. Perhaps there was a new way to invest the city and accomplish their aims, or simply wait out the American influx and eventual withdrawal.

Handing off Arghandab and Lower Shah Wali Kot, August 2009

Relations between Major J.F. Cauden's Recce Squadron, the American SeaBee construction engineers who were enhancing FOB Frontenac and the private security force at that facility were exceptionally good. Indeed, former American special operations personnel that were part of that security force favourably compared Canadian operations

in Arghandab to American special operations "due to the way we were operating and the relative small size of our patrols".[34] Relations with the incoming task force were, however, problematic. This manifested itself in a number of ways.

First, the 1-17 Infantry advance party was provided with contact information for the Recce Squadron. The main body, however, did not contact Major Cauden prior to its arrival. Second, 1-17 Infantry was a digitized Stryker battalion. In practical terms this mechanized unit relied on extremely sophisticated but fragile information management systems. For example, their electronic maps did not arrive with their advance force or main body for several weeks. Recce Squadron and TF Kandahar, anticipating this problem, ensured that enough paper maps were on hand to close the gap.

The deployment of the American battalion was, from Recce Squadron's perspective, disturbing. The American unit moved by tactical bounds from Kandahar to FOB Frontenac, but did not inform Recce Squadron or attempt to coordinate with it. During the course of this deployment, 1-17 Infantry rolled a vehicle. On arrival at the FOB, the American commanding officer received a handover briefing from Recce Squadron, which provided all of the information they had available on the situation, to whit: "Recent int was somewhat limited due to the fact that the squadron was in an Economy of Effort with little resources and that TFK/BG int resources were focused on the south."[35]

There were significant attitudinal differences between the incoming American unit and the Canadians in Arghandab. Major Cauden's view was that the incoming American commanding officer "wasn't listening at all" when the Recce Squadron briefings identified where the IED 'hot spots' were in the district: these included Route Red Dog, the old checkpoint DARRYL defile, and the Mansurabad area. Cauden explained his task, that is, keeping the Tarin Kot road access open, and that he deliberately limited activity in and around the hot spots. The 1-17 Infantry leadership scoffed at this and conveyed to Cauden that, to them, Canada was like all the other countries that "weren't fighting" and they were going to take offensive action and assert their presence. One company commander ordered his people to go everywhere the Canadians recommended they not go.[36]

On their first day of operations, 1-17 Infantry rolled a vehicle. On day two, they rolled another, injuring the driver. Then a road move down Route Red Dog resulted in an IED strike. 1-17 Infantry had procedures that emphasized immediately bypassing an IED strike site and carrying on, instead of consolidating and supporting the recovery effort. That protocol led to yet another IED strike. On another occasion, a 1-17 Infantry vehicle bogged down near the river and, because they would not request assistance from non-American units, the vehicle stayed bogged for nearly three days before it could be recovered. Before their first week was out, 1-17 Infantry reported a soldier missing in action; in fact, he was vaporized by an IED, and the battalion took some time to figure out how he had died.

In yet another incident, Recce Squadron had to help 1-17 Infantry recover a vehicle. After these fiascos, lower-level leaders in 1-17 Infantry discreetly contacted Recce Squadron and asked for advice, but they made sure their senior leaders were unaware of this.[37]

The Canadians also became aware that there were serious doctrinal differences within 1-17 Infantry. According to Maj Cauden, "The leadership did not believe in the counterinsurgency doctrine ordered by COMISAF and were firm believers in counter-guerilla doctrine."[38] BGen Vance tasked Recce Squadron to remain in Arghandab and support 1-17 Infantry during the run-up to the elections but, according to Maj Cauden, "I offered our services but the [American] CO did not want our support." The issue soon became moot; BGen Vance was increasingly concerned about the situation in southern Dand District and, by early September, Maj Cauden conducted his recce for the move south.

Kandahar City Operations, August–October 2009

The level of violence in Kandahar City spiked in August and September after the elections but then dramatically dropped off afterwards. All in all there were four IED attacks, four assassinations, one mortar attack, one rocket attack, and one direct fire attack. A breakdown is necessary as there were some nuances: not all acts of violence were demonstrably insurgent-generated. For example, the five assassinations included an assistant military prosecutor; a worker from the Independent Electoral Commission; a female worker from the Women's Affairs Office; a security contractor; and a teenage male with a 'night letter' attached to his corpse. Only two were provably insurgent attacks. Similarly, most of the IEDs were directed against UNAMA, UN-HABITAT, and National Directorate of Security headquarters.[39] The UN-HABITAT bombing was particularly problematic: in addition to the three killed and four wounded, the attack reduced the probability that UN-HABITAT could or would continue supporting the vital Community Development Councils or otherwise be involved in other forms of sub-district governance support.

However, the huge truck bomb that detonated in the middle of the city on 25 August and killed 50 and wounded 70 civilians was suspicious. Initially, Canadian analysts were confused because it did not explode near any government or coalition forces facility. Some even theorized that it was a premature detonation. Two days afterwards, the Taliban propaganda machine distanced itself from the attack and claimed no knowledge of it.[40] It was left up to Provincial Council leader Ahmad Wali Karzai to announce to the media that the target was the Japanese construction company, Saita, a firm that employed Afghan and Pakistani workers on road-building projects using Japanese International Cooperation Agency aid money.[41] To make matters even more interesting, Afghan police refused to search compounds believed to be associated with the attack's preparations.[42] Some Canadian observers concluded that the 25 August bombing was commercial violence over road construction contracting and not a Taliban attack.[43]

With the American influx in August there were now more and more security organizations operating in Kandahar City and this had the potential to lead to serious problems in coordination. BGen Vance re-emphasized the importance of the city's security framework and especially the role of his Afghan partners in the police and army:

> Firstly, the ANSF and CF must be able to control access to the City. He stated that this needs to be done by checking all of the vehicles entering the City; this process needs to be worked on by the Working Group and standards needed to be developed. Secondly, he stated that the joint patrols need to take place in the City itself … these operations needed to be intelligence-led as provided by the National Directorate of Security. He indicated that if these patrols were very active, it would make it impossible for the insurgents to operate. Thirdly, he indicated that the Afghan National Police must conduct routine operations while the Afghan National Army needs to have a very strong quick reaction force.[44]

In addition to the Afghan police, NDS, and army, there were now Canadian Police OMLT, American police mentors, Canadian CIVPOL advisors, Stab A from the PRT, the new Afghan Civil Order Police, and now 97th Military Police Battalion from the US Army. The OCC-P staff were ideally suited and situated to work on this problem, particularly in mentoring army, police, and NDS personnel in the art of coordination and division of responsibilities. They did everything they could to ensure Afghan ownership of the security tasks in Kandahar City. Stab A was represented in the Kandahar City Security Working Group, while the P-OMLT and the OCC-P reinvigorated the liaison systems connecting the Afghan organizations with coalition forces. The Afghan security forces were intrigued with the possibility of systematizing and standardizing the TOLO ATAL operations they successfully conducted earlier in the year. As a result, TOLO ATAL and the Kandahar City Security Plan merged as well and drew in the Joint Patrol operations.[45] These developments were facilitated by the arrival of the new Provincial Chief of Police, MGen Sardar Mohammad Zazai, who brought a fresh eye to the new activities.

Canadian CIVPOL and the P-OMLT worked on improving the city's rudimentary 911-like emergency telephone system. When a flood of calls to the insurgent tip line overwhelmed the system, one police communications officer added the number of his personal cellphone to emergency telephone system advertisements so he could take on part of the volume. The system ran into trouble when insurgents intimidated the cellphone service providers. Canadian observers were incredulous when this problem was eventually resolved in Kabul, where the cellphone companies and the government negotiated use of the phone system *with the insurgents*.[46] And that was not all. The Afghan Wireless Communications Company manager for the area, who had good relations with the OCC-P, reported a

disturbing situation where he and his staff were threatened by Provincial Shura members who wanted to tap free electrical power from the cell towers to their residences and, when they were told no "threatened to blow up the cell tower." The Afghan Wireless staff took their concerns to the Governor for adjudication and noted that they didn't want ISAF personnel to intervene but that they should be aware "in the event something happened down the road."[47]

As part of the consolidation of security activities in the city and the P-OMLT's move to the rural districts, the 97th Military Police Battalion took over the mentorship of four police sub-stations at the end of September 2009 and the duties of the U.S. Police Mentoring Team in early October. Thus, 300 American military police assumed the mentorship of all the Afghan police in Kandahar City, previously handled by 60 Canadians and 60 Americans. This change nearly tripled coalition policing capacity and significantly boosted the number of Joint Patrols.[48]

Stab A still tracked critical infrastructure in the city, especially the power plant and electricity supply — the Kajaki Dam provided Kandahar City with only two hours of power a day. Canadian CIMIC operators learned that the Taliban was extorting money from the power company in that "they were paid not to attack power lines" and they "mined maintenance stations along the lines so that they get paid to show [the power workers] where the mines are."[49] By October the power company received funds to expand their facilities and became eligible to maintain a security force. Hart Security from South Africa arrived to handle this task, which added yet another private security force for the OCC-P to keep track of.[50] The CIMIC teams learned that, before the Kajaki Dam problems and insurgent interference, Kandahar City usually consumed 40 megawatts of power. Now, the city survived on 11 megawatts, four from the dam and seven from the city power station, distributed by means of manually controlled rolling blackouts. This was not an ideal situation but one that was better than in the previous year.[51]

The PRT quick-reaction force, with its explosive ordnance disposal capabilities, regularly deployed. One event stands out: on 28 September, the Afghan National Police from Sub-Station 9 reported an IED and cordoned it off. The device detonated, hurting no one, but the Canadian team that arrived to clear the area found not one, but three Directional Fragmentation Charges set to kill first responders:

> While disarming the [fragmentation charge], C-IED heard the dial tone of the triggerman attempting to detonate the IEDs, however C-IED had removed the [dual-tone multi frequency receiver]. C-IED conducted a BIP [blow in place] on the IEDs and returned the evidence to Camp Nathan Smith.[52]

On another occasion, the PRT quick-reaction force had to deal with 5,500 pounds of homemade explosive that had been delivered to Camp Nathan Smith for disposal — in the middle of the night.

In late September, children and young men in several districts had taken to throwing rocks and bricks at Canadian patrols; by early October, these assaults were widespread. When PSYOPS patrols went to work on the problem, they learned that residents of one area had heard about innocent people dying in ISAF airstrikes, so they "sometimes don't know which side to take because the same things happen when the insurgents arrive as they also kill innocent people."[53] Further investigation revealed that shura members in the city were trying to:

> … educate adults to teach their children right from wrong and admit that it is likely their parents and the insurgents are promoting and provoking the incidents. The mullahs believe the insurgents are telling the kids to throw rocks and swarm ISAF vehicles in hopes that the kids might be arrested or injured which the insurgents would use as IO [information operations] against ISAF.[54]

Once again, the insurgency was using the Canadians' religious blind spot to undermine the coalition effort. The Afghan security forces decided on their own to launch joint patrols to cordon and search three suspect mosques. One of them contained a small insurgent hospital or aid station. Another had anti-American propaganda stockpiled in it.[55]

Eventually, a decision was made to develop a closer relationship with the Kandahar Ulema Shura, and LCol Carl Turenne's CIMIC and PSYOPS teams led the effort. In a meeting with Sayed Hanifi, the Kandahar Ulema Shura director, TF Kandahar was able to expand its knowledge of the religious dimension of the conflict:

> They have solid friendships with different media outlets who provide them with technical support with their equipment. [Hanifi] had been the director for four years now and said there weren't any tensions within the shura. When asked about a radio station called Talimul Islam, they reacted in fear as they had serious issues with that radio station. The station … is directed by Mohammad Omar Khitabi … [who] called them in order to challenge the moral authority of the Ulema Shura. Mr. Khitabi said nowhere in the Koran did it say that suicide bombings is not permitted and that jihad is not warranted against the foreigners. They asked [the Canadian team] who was funding the radio station, who responded that common knowledge seems to indicate that it is funded by businessmen and communities but they strongly suspect that insurgents are the predominant funding source. The Ulema Shura strongly encourages ISAF in investigating their funding sources.[56]

With BGen Vance's blessing, LCol Turenne established formal relations with the Ulema Shura, whose membership "recognizes the great work KPRT does for the people." In response to Stab A's requests for help with the rock-throwing problem, the Ulema Shura publicly condemned this behaviour and admonished parents to have their children cease and desist. Sayed Hanifi explained to LCol Turenne that "the shura is confronted with serious challenges, such as the assassination of 23 of their members [in the past five years]." LCol Turenne told Hanifi that "he would make any project to the Ulema Shura a top priority for his team."[57] This was *three years* after Capt Suleyman Demiray, the imam who was the CAF's first Muslim chaplain, warned that the religious front, and specifically the Ulema Shura, had to be systematically addressed if Canada was to succeed in assisting the Afghans in Kandahar.[58]

All the indicators pointed to continuing problems in District 6, which was no surprise as Mayor Hamidi had fired the District 6 manager as a prelude to cleaning up Malajat. On 8–9 October, 3rd Kandak with its Canadian mentors linked up with the Afghan police and *their* mentors for Operation KATAKAWAL KALAY PISHAK V, a sweep through District 6. Stab A deployed to positions south of Malajat to stop any insurgents exfiltrating in that direction as the sweep went in. There was no contact and little was uncovered.[59]

During this operation, information was received about a suspicious madrassa in Malajat. Stab A went back in to Malajat on 12 October, partly to shape Operation KALAY III and partly to examine the possibility of establishing a platoon house. While gathering information on the religious school, the Stab A team was assaulted with rocks and cries of "Allah Akbar!" while children gestured with their left hands. Clearly, all was not well in Malajat.[60]

Zharey District Operations, August–November 2009

The deteriorating situation in Zharey district seen over the summer and in the run-up to the elections prompted a re-allocation of forces in Task Force Kandahar. BGen Vance decided to move the bulk of 1-12 Infantry out of Maywand and into Zharey: this move, Operation LUR SAPA, commenced on 1 September. At the same time there were deliberations over the deployment of a sixth kandak to 1-205 Brigade. 6th Kandak was partially-trained and designated a 'road security kandak' to reflect its state. The problem was, who was going to mentor Kandak 6? The Canadian OMLT was completely tapped out. Planning commenced on replacing 1st Kandak in Zharey with 6th Kandak sometime in the fall of 2009.

The situation as it stood in Zharey in late August and into September had the enemy applying pressure on the strong points at Howz-e Madad, Lakhokhel, and Pulchakan in the west, and mounting a substantial harassment campaign on Highway 1 between FOB Wilson

and Strong Point Senjaray (see Figure 6-2 and Figure 6-2a). On the stretch between Wilson and Senjaray, coalition forces suffered six large IED strikes and 15 ambushes, and killed three emplacer teams in airstrikes in September alone. 1-12 Infantry lost PFC Matthew Wildes to an IED while the unit was moving to Zharey. Task Force Thor, the American route-clearance unit, suffered six strikes that wounded at least 12 soldiers and took the lives of Sgt Glen Stivison Jr, Spec Jesús Flores, Spec Daniel Lawson, PFC Jeremiah Monroe and PFC Brandon M. Styer.[61]

One of these attacks was accompanied by a direct-fire ambush that turned into a six-hour firefight. On 24 August, a TF Thor route-clearance team came under fire while exploiting an IED site on Highway 1. A Canadian quick-reaction force comprising Leopard 2A6M tanks and a platoon from B Company 2 R22eR sortied to support and soon took fire as well. The tanks opened up with 120-mm fire while the infantry advanced on the enemy positions south of the highway. An orbiting OH-58D Kiowa Warrior came on station, spotted enemy reinforcements, and engaged with rockets and .50 caliber machinegun fire. The helicopter crew spotted another enemy team and called down to the tanks, who took the enemy out with 120mm fire. The combined Canadian-American team was able to win the firefight against the ambushing forces and extracted to FOB Wilson.[62]

TF Kandahar was increasingly concerned:

> The size and targeting of IEDs along Highway 1 is becoming increasingly capable of routinely causing catastrophic kills when targeting CF armoured vehicles, and in several locations on three occasions due to large IED detonations (350 to 1,000 pounds of homemade explosives).[63]

These "deep-chamber charges were more and more popular with insurgents and were used to specifically target TF Thor in order to reduce the route clearance capacity on Highway 1.[64]

In order to assist with the 1-12 Infantry redeployment, Task Force Kandahar, 1-205 Brigade, and the Regional Battle Group (South) were all employed to relieve the pressure the enemy exerted on the Lakokhel-Pulchakhan-Howz-e Madad area. 1st Kandak and B Company 2 R22eR had already mounted Operation KATAKAWAL LAKOKHEL on 16–17 August to generate breathing room south of that strong point, and M-777 artillery with ScanEagle SUAV overwatch made short work of insurgents attempting to interfere with a sweep by 1st Kandak.[65] Insurgent retaliation employing 'shoot and scoot' attacks on 1 September was brushed off by 1st Kandak and the OMLT mentors.

The incoming elements from from 6th Kandak arrived by 1 September and the following day launched Operation KATAKAWA KALAYE PISHAK IV with 1st Kandak 1 and Canadian OMLT in support. This operation consisted of a pulse south of Howz-e

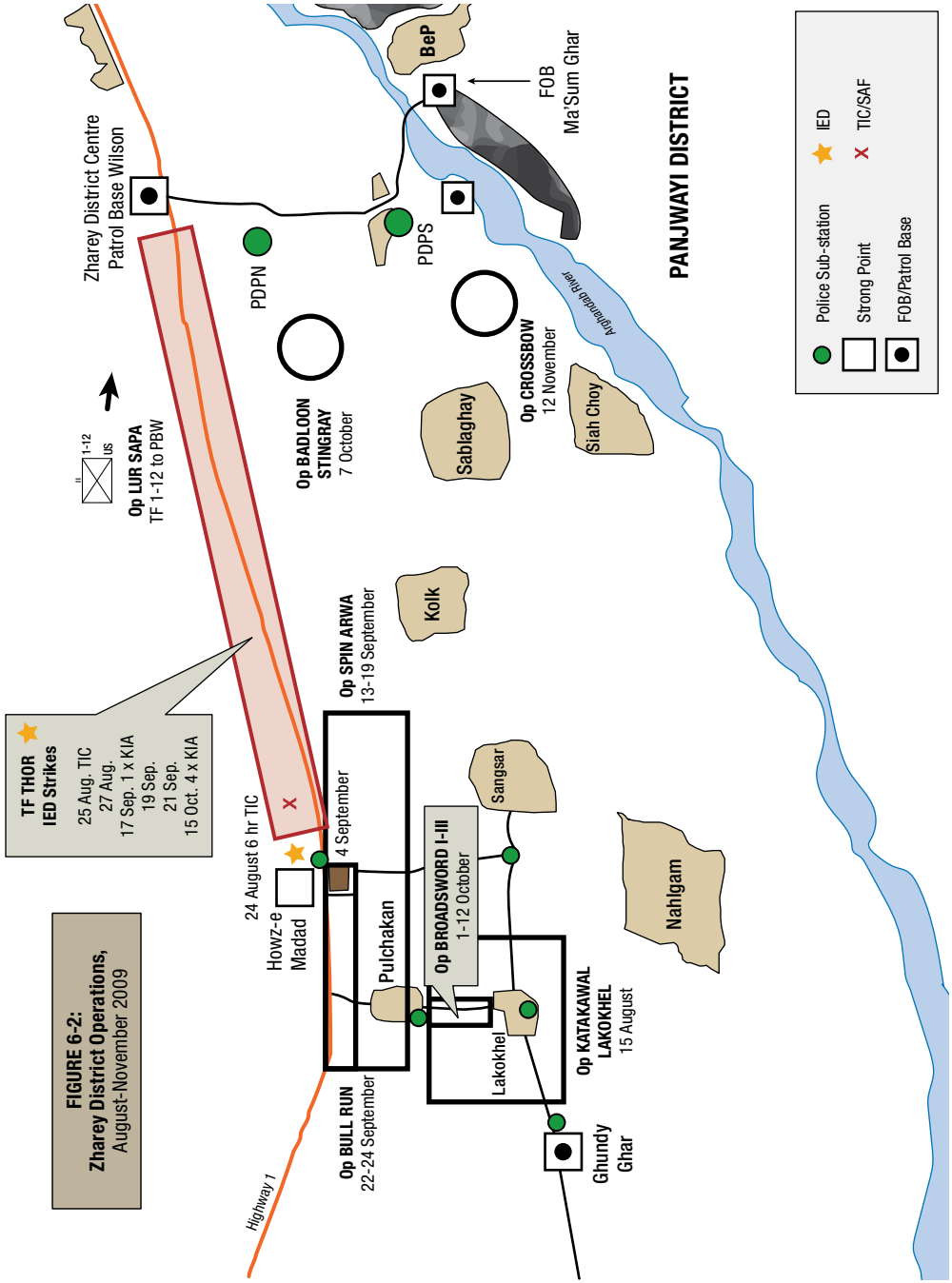

FIGURE 6-2:
Zharey District Operations,
August-November 2009

Figure 6-2: Zharey District Operations, August-November 2009

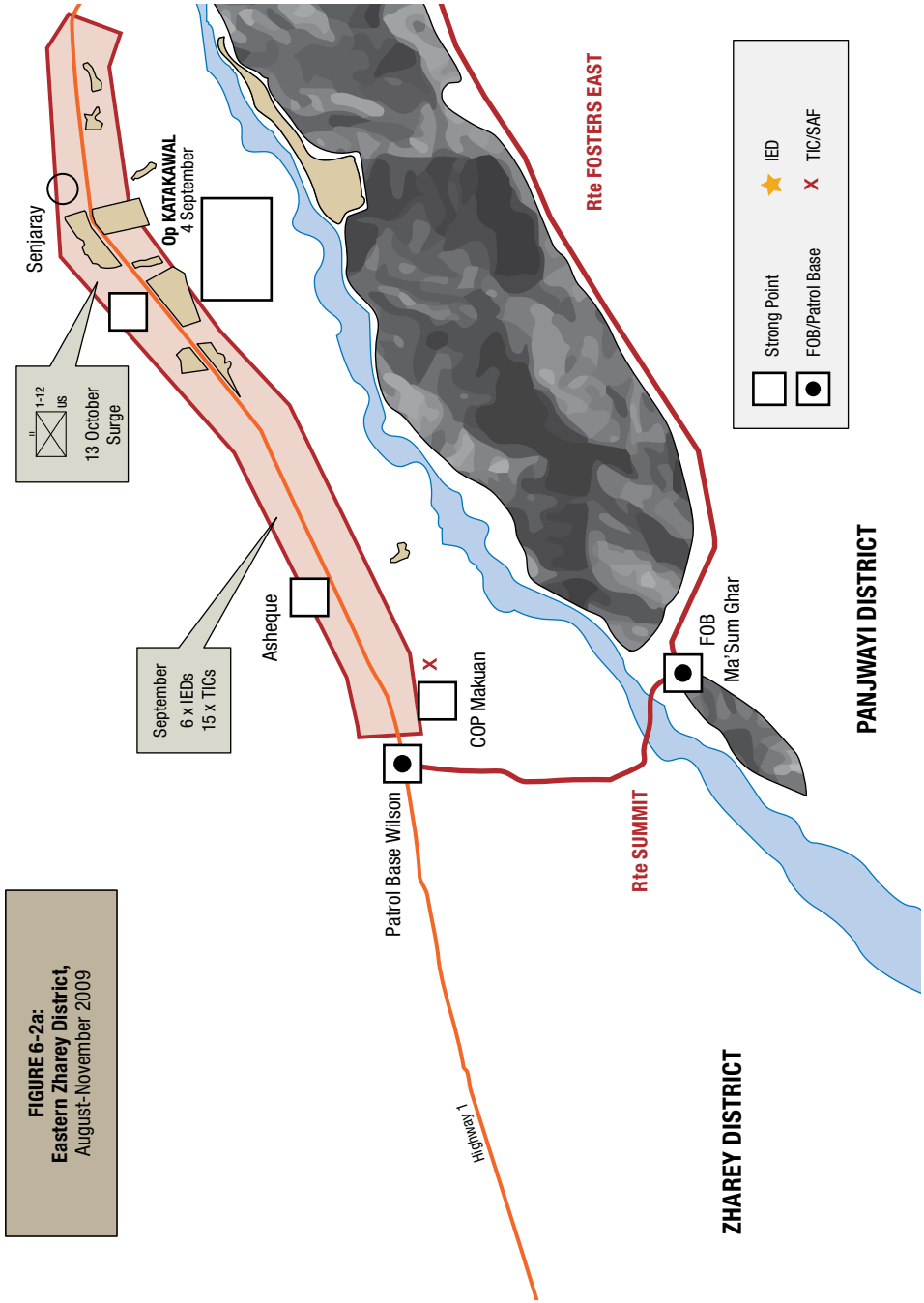

FIGURE 6-2a:
Eastern Zharey District,
August-November 2009

Figure 6-2a: Eastern Zharey District, August-November 2009

Madad to the first wadi line, followed by a second pulse south of Senjaray on 5 September. The Howz-e Madad phase ran into several contacts where 1st Kandak 1 had to extricate 6th Kandak covered by OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters. An IED on Highway 1 wounded several Afghan troops as they reinforced the action.

As we have seen, enemy activity in and around Howz-e Madad was usually supported from the Sangsar-Kolk area. BGen Vance secured the services of Regional Battle Group (South) for an airmobile operation into that area. On the night of 13 September, Operation SPIN ARWA began with the 2 R22eR Battle Group deploying a company with tanks on the highway as a block, and part of another company into Howz-e Madad to backfill the police and their mentors as they moved to the wadi lines to block west during the airmobile insertion. Insurgents opened fire on the arriving transport helicopters, but AH-64 Apaches supporting the insertion killed 20 insurgent fighters and wounded 10 more. When searched, compounds of interest yielded mortars, recoilless rifles, and AGS-17 automatic grenade launchers. All coalition elements involved in SPIN ARWA came under fire at various points the next day and at least 16 insurgents were killed in the course of these actions. Canadian engineers moved in to assist with compound clearance but one team triggered an antipersonnel mine, wounding two. Initially moving east towards Spin Pir along the wadi lines, the retreating enemy shifted direction and headed south away from the coalition forces. They were harassed by helicopters as they dispersed.[66]

On 23–24 September, 1-12 Infantry launched Operation BULL RUN with its reconnaissance unit south of Howz-e Madad to generate even more disruption as the battalion redeployed and conducted a relief in place at Ghundy Ghar. The idea was to catch insurgents flowing back after SPIN ARWA, but there was no substantial contact. To follow up and complement the previous action, the Afghan forces and mentors from the strong points in the area conducted a series of night ambush patrols from 10 October to 12 October. Again, no substantial contact was made.[67]

The Canadian mentors noted that:

> Op BROADSWORD III was conducted last night/early this morning. It entailed three squad-level ambushes (all mentored) [near Strong Points] Lakokhel, and Howz-e Madad. There was no contact. There were, however, no IEDs found in those locations during the road sweeps this morning. 1st Kandak 1-205 continues to locate between 2–3 IEDs a day. These soldiers, by necessity, become clever and astute detectors of IEDs. They have also paid a price — 19 soldiers from the kandak have been killed since March 2009 and another 40 seriously injured, mostly by IEDs.[68]

Canadian CIMIC operators remained engaged in Zharey district for some time as the American battalion flowed in and took over district TOC operations on 7-8 September. The following day American police mentors took over dealing with what remained of the Zharey Afghan Uniformed Police. Their reports were discouraging. Little measurable progress had been made in Zharey. The local population abused the land and damage claims processes. The District Leader pointed out that "there is no way to confirm that the damages really happened" and "when the claimants receive the money … many of them are leaving the district and are not rebuilding what has been destroyed."[69] The Taliban were so confident they kidnapped a doctor and his driver right out of the clinic at the Zharey District Centre, next door to FOB Wilson.[70] 1-12 Infantry reported that "the villagers want to help us but stated that if they help us then the Taliban will cut their heads off."[71] The cell phone system remained down throughout the district. Locals told CIMIC teams that the enemy controlled Pashmul, and threatening night letters frequently appeared at every mosque in the district.[72]

By mid-October, the many moving parts of Zharey District had to be reconciled. 1-12 Infantry had to regain lost ground so that a framework for aid and governance could be re-built and hopefully expanded in critical areas. Second, attacks on Highway 1 spiked again. The paved surface was heavily damaged in places, particularly in Senjaray, and needed remediation. There were the destroyed hulks of ambushed trucks everywhere. The coalition forces needed to regain the initiative in Zharey, but were there enough resources to address all of these problems?

Regional Command (South) was extremely concerned about the potential loss of freedom of movement out to Helmand and as a result re-prioritized ISTAR resources to Task Force Kandahar to monitor the road under a new operation called DALBOR SHIELD. Another operation, BAERBADI, was designed to clear the wrecks from the highway using engineer resources.[73] Elements of the Theatre Task Force (the 2nd Battalion 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, better known as Task Force 2 Fury), were brought in from Bagram Air Field for DALBOR SHIELD, and Regional Command (South) also allocated special operations forces, with a Canadian PSYOPS team in support. To make room for DALBOR SHIELD, TF Kandahar postponed Operation BADLOON, which involved regaining ground and influence with the people of eastern Zharey, and another iteration of SPIN ARWA with the Regional Battle Group (South).

DALBOR SHIELD benefited from analysis conducted by Major Nils French and a small team in Task Force Kandahar who worked outside of existing paradigms to determine how, and more importantly, when the enemy conducted operations in particular locations. Using informal 'bubba-con' liaison with various American organizations, they were able to provide recommendations to LCol Mike Patrick on allocation of forces to protect Highway 1.

Regional Command (South) was too enthralled with operations in Helmand to express interest, but TF ODIN, the American C-IED task force, was impressed with the Canadian methodology and quietly re-allocated ISTAR assets from Helmand to Kandahar to support DALBOR SHIELD.[74]

In addition to TF Thor and TF Odin operations, 1-12 Infantry mounted 12 combat patrols per day, on average, along Highway 1. 6th Kandak was finally fully deployed and its soldiers expanded their patrolling matrix alongside 1-12 Infantry. American mentors came in to work with 6th Kandak but Canadian mentor team remained in the area to assist with this effort. Vehicle checkpoints went up and snap inspections were conducted all along the highway. Air assets re-allocated to DALBOR SHIELD got their first kills on 22-23 October. One insurgent emplacement team operating near Howz-e Madad was engaged by an OH-58D Kiowa Warrior which resulted in the secondary detonation of a large amount of homemade explosives being transported in yellow jugs. An A-10 Warthog destroyed another IED team, killing three to five insurgents and wounding others. This last attack also wounded an enemy leader operating nearby and ISTAR resources were focused to find out who it was and what possible impact the strike could have on the insurgent command structure.[75]

The insurgents backed away from using IEDs on the highway and resorted to ambushes. After several encounters, 1-12 Infantry concluded that these were 'come on' attacks designed to draw forces into even larger ambushes on IED-laden local routes. Teams of OH-58D Kiowa Warrior and AH-64 Apache helicopters patrolled the first and second wadi lines, hoping to catch insurgents moving up from Kolk and Sangsar to the road fights. On one occasion, a Canadian-mentored Afghan patrol triggered an IED, severely wounding an Afghan soldier and initiating an ambush. While under fire, mentor MCpl Gilles-Remi Mikkelson moved into the open to give the wounded man life-saving first aid while the patrol laid down covering fire so they could all withdraw safely. MCpl Mikkelson received the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.

In a daily report to TF Kandahar, 1-12 Infantry described their situation.

> We have become separated from the population, and secondary roads the locals use are filled with IEDs … The people in Zharey District are living in fear of the Taliban and now are becoming separated from ISAF, Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police forces due to the limited amount of patrols south of Highway 1. The battalion has not been able to focus on projects or economic development due to combat power focused upon the highway.[76]

Photo Credit: Author

Photo Credit: Author

U.S. Army units operating in Zharey district with Joint Task Force Afghanistan did not initially have access to American brigade-level resources. In many cases, they were provided with the full range of Canadian Army support including psychological operations, civil-military cooperation, and an M-777 troop plus 81mm mortars.

By early November, a daily report from 1-12 Infantry indicated little change.

> The battalion sustainment of Operation DALBOR SHIELD is causing a drain on the soldiers. The soldiers want to move beyond the security of the highway and begin the clear, hold, build of the Senjaray/Bagh-e Pol areas.[77]

6th Kandak "suffered from a lack of mentorship" and was not turning out as effective as hoped. ISTAR resources were re-tasked away from the area when IED activity died down and, once they were gone, the IED strikes resumed. Then mortar bombs started to rain down on FOB Wilson. A stonk on 23 November seriously wounded several American soldiers and started fires in the FOB, including one in a sea container. After administering to the wounded in the open, Pte Tony Harris extricated a soldier trapped in the burning container and, with the help of Pte Phillip Millar, rendered first aid as the mortar rounds continued to fall. For their actions in saving several lives that day, Pte Harris and Pte Millar received the Medal of Military Valour.

The enemy shifted to attacking traffic on Route SUMMIT: a Canadian EROC suite was engaged with an 82mm recoilless rifle. This attack was followed by a day-long TIC on Route Summit between enemy forces and a police mentor team. Leopard 2 tanks sortied to engage in support, and mortar bombs crashed down from FOB Wilson. After five fatal casualties, the insurgents melted away to the west, harassed by helicopters as they dispersed. The Canadian Helicopter Force inserted part of 1-12 Infantry north of Pashmul, which resulted in no contact, while 1st Kandak and their Canadian mentors went hunting for the 82-mm recoilless rifle teams.

At the end of November, the lines were slowly redrawn. Route Summit was kept open, Highway 1 was still passable, and American and Afghan patrols were starting to have an effect in the communities in the eastern part of Zharey. The telephone companies had yet to be convinced to restore service, but significantly more information flowed into the Joint District Coordination Centre. A single USAID worker arrived to join the Canadian CIMIC operators in forming a small District Support Team.[78]

Dand District Operations, August–October 2009

TF Kandahar remained focused on accentuating the positive in Dand district throughout the fall of 2009. As we will recall, Operation KALAY I stabilized the community of Deh-e Bagh and expanded the coalition presence southward to Chineh and Monar. The Construction Management Organization worked with local leaders to implement local infrastructure projects like roads and canals, while the Specialist Engineer Team focused on attracting construction companies to larger projects like refurbishing the

Dand District Centre, constructing a district police station, and paving main service routes. Stab B played a crucial role in facilitating all these activities by working closely with the increasingly impressive District Leader Abdul Nazek.

By late August, Dand had a functional Joint District Coordination Centre, but not enough police to backfill the Canadian military forces when they moved on. The Police OMLT could only do so much for so long. The P-OMLT worked in Deh-e Bagh, Chineh and Monar, awaited a solution to the police recruitment problem.[79]

TF Kandahar launched Operation KALAY II concurrent with these movements. (see Figure 17-3) The KALAY II villages were Belanday, Rumbasi, and Teymurian, a trio of communities selected because of their proximity to Route Lake Effect (Belanday and Rumbasi) and because they screened the Deh-e Bagh stability (now called Stability Box TONKA), from the west and south-west (Rumbasi and Teymurian). As Deh-e Bagh acted as a gateway to Malajat and Kandahar City, Belanday, Rumbasi, and Teymurian acted as a gateway to Deh-e Bagh. The threat, as we will recall, emanated from the Nahkonay area, supported by the safe havens in the Horn of Panjwayi, Talukan and Zangabad.

The Shape-Clear-Hold-Build process was then applied to Belanday, Rumbasi and Teymurian. CIMIC and PSYOPS teams made contact with the village leaders in late August and early September, and, when possible, secured introductions to the district leader. A Company 2 R22eR followed to establish an immediate security presence, and then handed over to Stab B. CIMIC operators assessed the state of the Community Development Council (if any) and then worked with local leaders to identify projects. In October, assessment teams from the Construction Management Organization arrived to help the local leaders prioritize the projects, work out the engineering aspects, and then hire local people to work on them. By October road construction and canal projects were up and running in Belanday, Rumbasi and Teymurian.[80]

These development projects were so successful that TF Kandahar decided to expand KALAY II to the community of Angurian and then consider communities south of the Dori River. B Squadron, now released from Arghandab District, moved its headquarters to Teymurian and projected its presence southwest towards Gorgan.[81] Thus far all of the selected communities were receptive to Operation KALAY II. Indeed, KALAY I's success was noticed by the people in them, who now wanted in on the action. Poor leadership in Rumbasi was rectified with a visit from the district leader.[82]

The main problem now was the Hold part of the plan. Thirty-eight new police officers arrived in Dand, but "only 17 were FDD qualified and only two had personal weapons." Some were "refugees" from Zharey with "no discipline; to keep them in a room for more than 20 minutes would require physical force." When 15 of these new officers were assigned to Teymurian, six deserted and the rest returned to the district police station. Even the cops

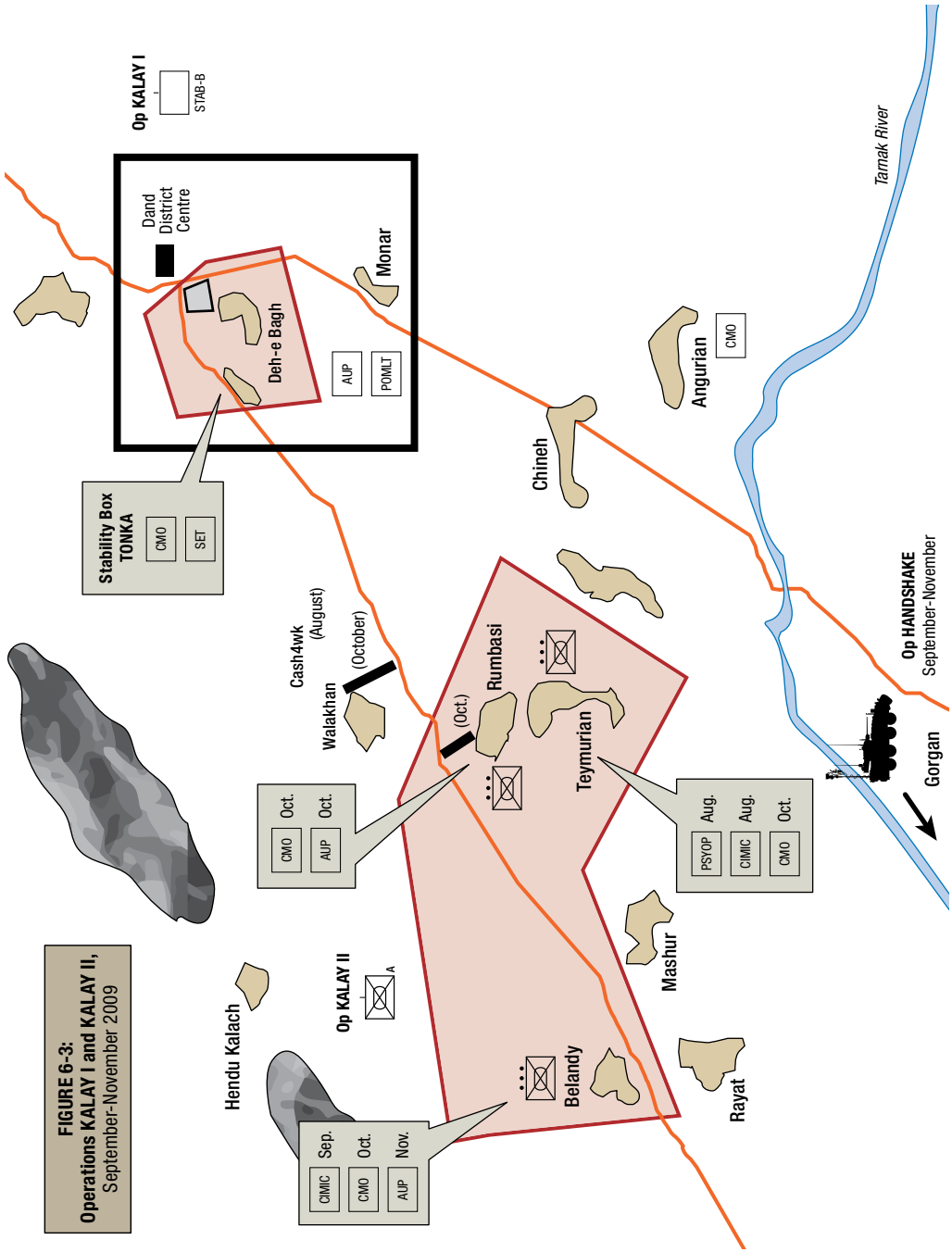

FIGURE 6-3:
Operations KALAY I and KALAY II,
September-November 2009

Figure 6-3: Operations KALAY I and KALAY II, September-November 2009

Photo Credit: Author

The improvement in Dand District's security was matched by significant economic progress. This is a pair of the famous Dand brick kilns and their wares along a paved highway, as opposed to the dirt roads and more agrarian activities in a more violent Panjwayi District. These same kilns lay derelict when the author drove through the area in 2005.

in Deh-e Bagh were absent.[83] The P-OMLT and the despairing District Chief of Police, Col Sher Shah, did what they could with what they had. The P-OMLT then fortuitously received information that an armed Barakzai militia belonging to the Sherzai family was operating in eastern Dand and into neighbouring Daman District. On making contact with their leader General Muhammad Dawood, the P-OMLT learned that there were "… eight Sherzai checkpoints [were] still operating. When the P-OMLT mentor asked why the security was so good … Dawood answered that the families living there were all Barakzai tribe and have been living there for hundreds of years, therefore any stranger is expelled very quickly."[84] Arrangements were made to assimilate the Barakzai militia into the Afghan Uniformed Police as soon as possible.[85]

Why was Dand getting the dregs of the Kandahar police force? This was likely related to the renewed emphasis on Kandahar City operations taking away quality police and the situation did not bode well for the KALAY operations. As for the Afghan army, 1-205 Brigade kandaks were fully engaged and only the recce company from 4th Kandak could be made available to support KALAY.[86] Eventually the American mentoring organization, Task Force 2 Fury, made arrangements to move a Police Advisory Team from Daman District to Dand.[87]

In spite of these challenges, KALAY I achieved a steady state in early October. District Leader Nazek was instrumental in this by reaching out to the Deh-e Bagh communities and encouraging them to increase school attendance, a move that was reinforced with CIMIC resources.[88] By mid-October, TF Kandahar was comfortable enough with the situation to recommend transferring the reconstruction and development activities in Deh-e Bagh from the Construction Management Organization to the Whole of Government partners at the PRT.[89]

The level of violence directed against the KALAY operating areas was relatively low throughout the fall. Enemy moves amounted to intimidation operations directed at Rumbasi and Gorgan, a suspicious fire at the clinic in Teymurian, and there was some IED activity on Route Lake Effect. The coalition forces responded by allocating an American route clearance package to the area to regularly sweep the roads. There was a suicide terrorist alert in Deh-e Bagh, but a surge of security forces (Operation GAME SHOW) deterred the bomber. Local people regularly provided tips to security forces wherever they were operating, and throngs showed up to join construction projects, but the population in Rumbasi was not as receptive as the other communities were.[90]

District Leader Nazek understood the role of the mullahs in village life and took special measures to rebalance village governance. In the past the roles of the village leader (malik) and the mullah in each community were complementary but during the years of the Soviet occupation the mullahs were devalued in this capacity and primacy given to the malik. Under the Taliban, the mullah was then elevated above the malik. With the various reconstruction and development agencies not wanting to deal with the mullahs and more comfortable dealing with the malik as a point of contact, it appeared to some Afghans that the aid agencies were in line with the Soviet way of doing business. That perception increased their susceptibility to Taliban 'wandering mullahs' who activated grievances and stirred up trouble. (The community development council could include the local mullah and thus was a more valuable tool for the developers and reconstructers.)[91] Nazek collected the mullahs for a shura at the Dand District Centre:

> The district leader was impressive in dealing with the much older and opinionated mullahs. With [30–40 people] in attendance, he was forceful in stating their responsibility in dealing with those who would come to their villages to plant or hide IEDs. He explained that their silence could be costing them the lives of their women and children. He further stated the importance of what ISAF is doing in the area and that we are not the enemy. The shura lasted two hours and was quite spirited at times.[92]

When Malajat was incorporated into Dand District in November, Nazek called another shura with all the mullahs and informed the contingent from Malajat that they were required to register both themselves and their madrassas, or they would have to leave the district. There was grumbling, but Nazek's approach might solve the problem of the subversive madrassa in Malajat without using overt means.[93]

Maj Cauden and Recce Squadron arrived from Arghandab District and deployed to the southeastern part of the district with the task of maintaining situational awareness. Cauden selected two former Soviet OP 'mounds', one near Teymurian and another near Gorgan. With mast-equipped Coyotes, this afforded significant observation of what became known as the Adamzai Chain near Kenjakak, and the communities between the two positions and the Reg Desert. Recce Squadron, augmented with Recce Platoon, pushed out foot patrols in their areas and developed the pattern of life. Eventually a troop of Leopard tanks arrived and they were positioned at the Gorgan observation position mound. They could bring observation and fire to bear and interdict any movement from the west. In time small CIMIC projects were underway in Gorgan and Teymurian.[94]

Maj Cauden also had to keep the PBR road under observation to ensure that IED emplacers did not cut off the squadron's resupply efforts. Recce patrols assessed that the population living in the area south to the desert were in survival mode but leaned toward the government. Indeed, District Leader Nazek was originally from Gorgan.[95]

Throughout this period the Construction Management Organization continuously employed between 750 and 1000 people, almost all of them fighting-age males.[96] To ensure that those men remained out of the enemy camp they needed viable, long-term work and thus it was now time to hand off those CMO projects to the various 'implementing partners' managed by the UN and the Canadian whole of government partners. A lull in activity thus could prove to be extremely problematic if it gave the insurgents an opportunity to recruit these men. By early November the UNOPS road projects designated for Dand had not yet started. It was critical that this transfer be managed carefully during the upcoming relief in place between the incoming and outgoing Joint Task Force Afghanistan headquarters. Could continuity be maintained and momentum sustained in Dand while that happened?[97]

Panjwayi District Operations, August–September 2009

By the end of the summer, Panjwayi District was in a state of turbulence on all levels. The Construction Management Organization was through with the Route HYENA Paving Project. The contractor, Bennett-Fouch, was intransigent, Blue Hackle security was exasperated, and the presence of 300 to 400 fighting age males with nothing better to do alarmed TF Kandahar. To curry favour with the Canadians, District Leader Haji Baran 'helpfully' stepped in and told the employees that the project was suspended because it

was Ramadan. That bought another month.[98] However, the problems with Bennett-Fouch were insoluble. Accused of defrauding the Afghan government of millions of dollars, the owner of Bennett-Fouch faked suicide so she would not be extradited to Kabul from the United States to stand trial. Bennett-Fouch came under increased scrutiny from American inspectors and was eventually suspended from conducting business in Afghanistan.[99] The irony of Haji Baran's magnanimous assistance in ending a project he had hindered so thoroughly was not lost on the CIMIC teams.

Attempts to get the District Development Assembly running completely stalled out. On the second meeting between the DDA and the Central Asian Development Group, Stab B and Canadian CIMIC were the only ones present. CIMIC noted that Baran adhered to his obligations to hold a DDA meeting monthly but it didn't necessarily mean that anything was actually accomplished during it.[100]

As for policing, the situation had completely deteriorated: relations between the Police OMLT and the police "have hit an all-time low point." Ostensibly this related to accusations of theft over a set of night vision goggles but the underlying reality was that there was no police leadership:

> the lack of support and authority that is given to the district chief of police and the constant threat of removal has resulted in his motivation being almost zero. The AUP is not patrolling or making their presence felt in the Bazaar-e Panjwayi area; they are however carrying on with the morning route sweeps and have conducted one deliberate operation with the PMT.[101]

To make matters worse,

> The Afghan National Police shot and killed an individual that they believed was an insurgent, they then dumped his body in front of a mosque in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and then told the locals that he was Taliban and this is what happens to Taliban. The total lack of professionalism demonstrated by the Panjwayi Afghan National Police is very concerning and indicative of much larger problems.[102]

A pair of suicide bomb attacks in the middle of Bazaar-e Panjwayi itself ramped up anxieties: one bomber leapt into an Afghan army Ranger vehicle and detonated, wounding eleven people. The other blew himself into oblivion and caused no damage whatsoever.[103] The incidents did highlight the lack of security in the town itself, but on 17 September the enemy went after a Canadian convoy as it negotiated Bazaar-e Panjwayi. This IED was emplaced to catch security forces conducting a vital point search: it wounded eleven and killed Private Jonathan Couturier of 2 R22eR.[104]

Eventually, police gasoline thefts from FOB Ma'Sum Ghar led to them being banned from the base. The American police mentors eventually increased to 44 from 14, but then their interpreters started knifing each other, which led to investigation after investigation. The entire police effort in the district was completely attenuated by the end of September,[105] LCol Paul was extremely concerned that the problems with the Panjwayi police would negatively affect Operation KALAY II and the upcoming Operation BADLOON, which was supposed to highlight the shift from 'big operations' to platoon house operations in eastern Panjwayi.[106]

As a result, ANP Regional Deputy Commander BGen Mirwais came down from Kandahar City to sort the situation out. He convinced the Panjwayi police chief to stay and the Canadians to be more patient and to support him. As it turned out the primary issue was police manning at the Three Tank Hill site. The police officers did not want to be used as infantry to defend it and wanted to conduct policing activities. Arrangements were made to shift the Afghan army to the Three Tank Hill positions and relieve the police. That arrangement had an anodyne effect on the situation.[107]

Photo Credit: Courtesy of TF 1-09 Tank Squadron personnel

The lack of helicopters produced an unhealthy dependence on ground travel. The insurgency quickly realized this fact and employed IEDs that were both plentiful and nefarious. This is an Afghan National Police Ranger truck that has been completely destroyed, along with its occupants, in Panjwayi district.

Governance issues continued to plague the district. When the new CIMIC arrived in late September, the 'usual suspects' came out of the woodwork to curry favour: Haji "Dollars" Agha Lalai; Haji Mahmood; and District Leader Haji Baran. Baran immediately asked for fuel and phone cards but was told by the CIMIC team that a new organization, the District Administrative Assembly, would be activated and that all requests of that nature should be put to it, not CIMIC.[108] The Canadian CIMIC operators were not surprised when they learned that Baran told the local population a day after that confrontation "that they should demonstrate against the Canadians for not wanting to do their land claims and not wanting to give them money."[109] Worse, when CIMIC arranged to pay compensation to the family of a man accidentally killed by the security forces, Baran sent friends to the ceremony who pretended to be relatives and they took a proportion of the compensation payment with them.[110]

Battle group operations in Panjwayi during the fall of 2009 focused on a transition from large district-level operations to dispersed community-level operations, all in preparation for Operation KALAY III.[111] As we have seen, KALAY I reached a steady state in the Build phase, while KALAY II was well on its way toward the shift from Hold to Build. Although police problems continued to hinder the Hold phase of KALAY II, the 2 R22eR Battle Group launched the Shape and Clear phases of KALAY III in September: "The mandate General Vance gave LCol Paul was very easy. 'Jo, you will create those platoon houses and co-located with you will be the Afghan army sections living on the same piece of infrastructure. And I want those platoon houses to be capable of moving within 24 hours'."[112]

The initial moves included Operation LEOPARD ASSERTION, a feint by C Squadron's tanks into southern Panjwayi District, followed by a link-up with Recce Squadron on the Dand-Panjwayi boundary near Gorgan, southeast of Nakhonay.[113] That part of the plan was initially marred by a mobility kill on one tank by an IED, but then the same day LCol Paul's tactical headquarters convoy was targeted with a command wire IED. The blast flipped the engineers' LAV III, killing Maj Yannick Pépin and Cpl Jean-François Drouin of the 5e Régiment du Génie de combat and wounding five other Canadians. The triggerman was apprehended.[114]

LCol Paul then initiated a series of three operations called NAFIZ (see Figure 6-4), in which the Canadian Helicopter Force inserted Recce Platoon 2 R22eR into the villages of Chalghowr, Fathollah and Salavat for surprise sweeps with back-up from A Company on the ground. In Fathollah on 2 September, Recce Platoon went in and got out again with no enemy contact and no issues. On 7 September, Recce Platoon was engaged on the Landing Zone by a ten-man enemy party. Harassed by OH-58D Kiowa Warriors and tracked by Heron and Reaper UAVs, they succumbed to a flurry of Hellfire missiles and rockets from

the helicopters. Recce Platoon encountered no further opposition. One Canadian Chinook took some fire but was able to make it back to Kandahar Air Field with some damage. When NAFIZ moved into Chalgowr on 25 September, a similar situation played out: a ten-man enemy team applied PKM and RPG fire three times during the course of the day, which led to CH-146 Griffons and OH-58D Kiowa Warriors firing back, killing two and dispersing the rest.[115] On 13 September, an A Company LAV III supporting NAFIZ hit an IED while screening along Route Lake Effect. This strike killed Pte Patrick Lormand of 2 R22eR and wounded four others.[116]

NAFIZ helped define the limit of overt enemy activity in eastern Panjwayi, and it was synchronized with B Company's advance on 25 September to the Mohajerin area to prepare the ground for platoon house operations — the start of Operation BADLOON. B Company encountered some harassing fire and uncovered a sophisticated daisy-chain IED but little else. Following B Company, the engineer squadron moved in and built platoon houses, while CIMIC contacted local leaders who were pleased to get some Canadian attention after hearing about positive events in Dand. Local people also reported insurgent activities, and, on one occasion, even chased the insurgents away.[117] As LCol Paul noted,

> It took a month to figure out that relationship and learn what was important to the locals. It's pure COIN theory. The locals are caught between a rock and hard place. They are sitting on the fence. Until you live amongst them 24/7 until you can provide them security, you don't stand a chance. They're not stupid. And I don't blame them. Who would blame them? To me the platoon houses were clearly a turning point.[118]

Low-level operations produced substantial, measurable benefits: "My two [intelligence] cells were extremely tight with the All Source Intelligence Centre, they would compare notes then we would fuse the information."[119] The community of Nakhonay, however, was noticeably problematic the closer 2 R22eR Battle Group moved their platoons towards it and the number of IED events went up: "We started to do the containment of Nakhonay; the PRT was flooding the area with money for projects. We knew the Taliban were there. They were upset because they were losing their manpower base. The young locals were working for us."[120]

Battle Group Relief in Place, October 2009

It was now time for the 2 R22eR Battle Group to depart and the 1st Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (1 PPCLI) Battle Group rotated in throughout October. 1 PPCLI Battle Group, led by LCol Jerry Walsh, was structured as its predecessors had been, with three rifle companies —A Company commanded by Maj Ryan Jurkowski, C Company under Maj Wade Rutland, and D Company led by Maj Wayne Niven — and Recce Platoon under

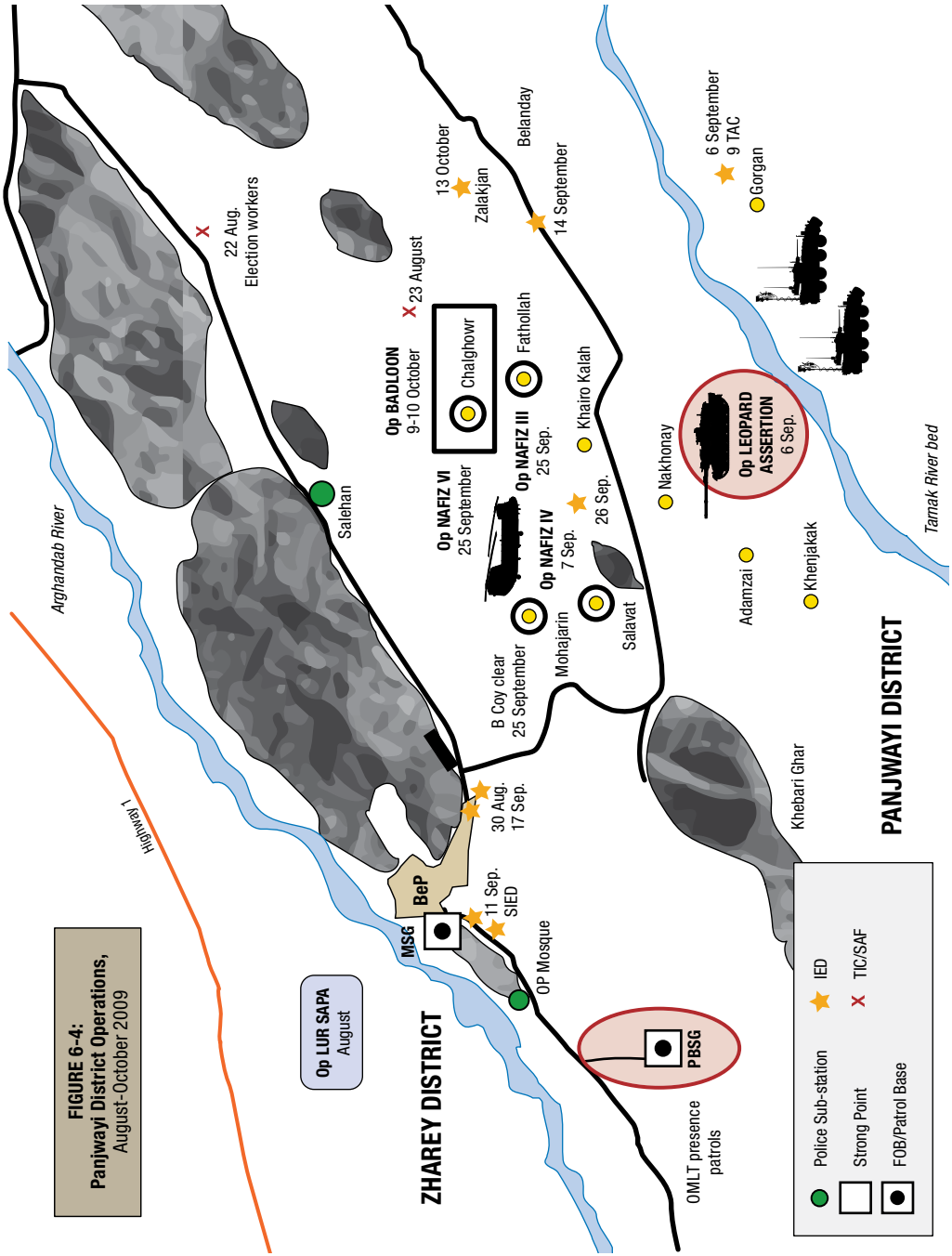

Figure 6-4: Panjwayi District Operations, August-October 2009

Capt Mike MacKillop. The tanks were B Squadron, The Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians), under Maj Rob Hume, and the armoured recce were B Squadron, Royal Canadian Dragoons, under Maj Mark Popov. The guns were C Battery from the 1st Regiment, Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, commanded by Maj Shawn Fortin, and the engineer element was 11 Field Squadron from 1st Combat Engineer Regiment, under Maj Trevor Friesen. Unlike its immediate predecessors, the 1 PPCLI Battle Group also had Admin Company under Maj Darcy Wright, a veteran of CTF Aegis in 2006. Its addition indicated a return to doctrinal normalcy.

The PPCLI Battle Group laydown initially mimicked that of their predecessors once they were ensconced in the platoon houses. A Company 1 PPCLI, working from Ma'Sum Ghar, had platoon-sized patrol bases in Mohajerin and Salavat. A Company 2 R22eR remained in Rumbasi, Zalakhan, Belanday and at a patrol base called A-10 (later renamed Shoja). Together, these two companies were responsible for KALAY-style operations north of Route Lake Effect to Route Hyena. C Company and Recce Platoon 1 PPCLI were in Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar, while the tanks remained based at Ma'Sum Ghar. Recce Squadron took over operations in Dand, with Patrol Base Marianne, Patrol Base Echo, and one Coyote deployed as an observation post. The guns were split between Sperwan Ghar and FOB Wilson in Zharey, while 11 Field Squadron was dispersed among the infantry companies. D Company 1 PPCLI was in the process of deploying to replace a 2 R22eR company by mid- to late October.[121]

1 PPCLI Battle Group arrived at a time of some turbulence. BGen Vance and MGen de Kruif were leaving, and BGen Daniel Ménard and MGen Nick Carter were coming in to replace them. The American influx was also in play, as were substantial changes in how the operational mentoring teams were going to restructure. As a result LCol Walsh and his planners held off issuing the battle group tactical action plan until the end of October. 1 PPCLI Battle Group was partnered with 2nd Kandak from 1-205 Brigade under LCol Baris, a leader who had substantial experience working with Canadians. Unfortunately, his kandak was under strength.[122]

During the relief in place, BGen Vance established Joint Task Force Afghanistan's objectives for the remainder of October and November. The strategic priorities were:[123]

1. convince higher headquarters and the Afghan government that Kandahar Province must be the main effort for 2010;

2. prepare for the new commander of Regional Command (South), MGen Nick Carter; and

3. eliminate extraneous visits during the relief in place.

Operational priorities included:

1. solidify Afghan National Army posture and laydown; and

2. obtain visibility of atmospherics in Kandahar City.

Tactical priorities were:

1. conduct operations against Nakhonay;

2. provide security on Highway 1;

3. secure interior lines of communication;

4. Dand District security and operations toward governance, reconstruction and development; and

5. secure counter-IED resources for protection of interior lines and Highway 1.

Operation BADLOON continued as the new battle group worked with the engineers and the Afghans to solidify their presence in the villages and towns north of Route Lake Effect.

Panjwayi District Operations, October–November 2009

The new laydown in eastern Panjwayi led to plans for establishing combat roads between the various platoon houses and patrol bases, which meant an expansion of CIMIC and Construction Management Organization activities, and thus the possibility of spin-off benefits for local residents. Extensive coordination was done with LCol Baris of 2nd Kandak while A Company and D Company were deploying. A Company had one platoon in Salavat, another in Mohajerin, and a third in reserve at Ma'Sum Ghar, while one of 2nd Kandak's companies deployed platoons to Salavat and Mohajerin partnered with the Canadians. 2 R22eR had been in place for a short time before the rotation, so it was critical to define the area with foot and mounted patrols. These were conducted with maximum deception at the company and battle-group levels, and designed to convince the enemy that the battle group was ignoring Nakhonay in the run-up to Operation HYDRA.[124]

During this phase, A Company was able to define the situation more clearly. Working with the village elders, Maj Jurkowski discerned that each village had its own dynamic and was in fact a 'village-state' in some respects where religious interpretation, local or tribal culture, or vendettas governed behavior. Nakhonay and Chalgowr were "red", that is, insurgent-dominated. Mohajerin was neutral but leaning to the pro-government side, and Salavat, the largest of the communities, was run by a population of indifferent fence-sitters. In Salavat locals would share information with the Afghan army yet complex IEDs were accidentally uncovered by patrols. Fatollah, on the other hand, was fence-sitting but leaning towards the government.[125]

The enemy held counter-shuras at night after A Company and their Afghan counterparts had held meetings in the communities during the day. Anything provided to the local people by the coalition forces was confiscated and destroyed, including tools and food. When the Canadians wanted to go after these teams, their ANA partners said no, let the enemy bury themselves with the people. The result was more and better information started to flow from the locals.[126]

An example of this involved one of the snipers assigned to A Company who was tasked as an intelligence assessor. His analysis led to a cache of IED components situated between Mohajerin and Chalghowr. A platoon was directed to the site which turned out to be a massive radio-controlled IED cache. On exploitation, the All Source Intelligence Centre's excitement level increased to the point where a helicopter was dispatched from KAF to recover one specific item which in turn was immediately put on a transport plane to the United States for in-depth exploitation. A Company personnel were later told this find was the counter-IED equivalent of breaking the Enigma Code.[127]

As the Construction Management Organization came in with money to hire local people for road construction, enemy intimidation started up in Mohajerin and Salavat to challenge it. Both A Company and their Afghan partners mounted night patrols to re-assure the population. This in turn led to significant amounts of information on local Taliban activities. The enemy expressed his annoyance at this by flinging a handful of mortar rounds at and then probing the Shojah patrol base. They were driven back twice with 155mm fire from C Battery. Canadian and Afghan patrols noticed that enemy observers used kites as signaling devices and informants passed on that the locals in Nakhonay were filling a lot of sandbags.[128] (see Figure 6-5).

Meanwhile, over in Sperwan Ghar, Maj Wade Rutland and C Company conducted an aggressive series of patrols in the Nal Bazaar and Pay-e Moluk communities west of Route Brown. Meanwhile, over in Sperwan Ghar, Maj Wade Rutland and his men from C Company conducted an aggressive series of patrols in the Nal Bazaar and Pay-e Moluk communities west of Route BROWN. This paid off in a matter of days as locals who

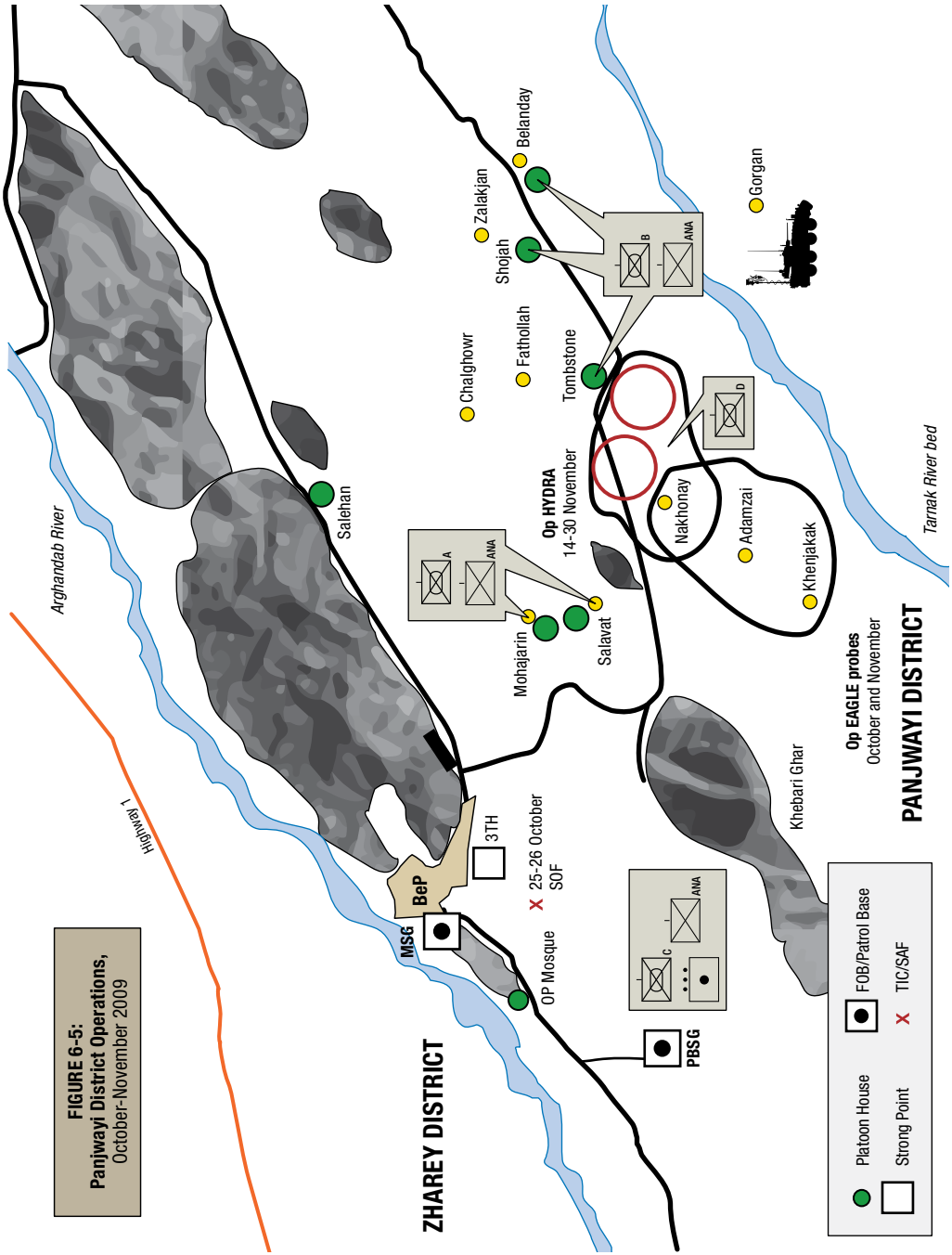

Figure 6-5: Panjwayi District Operations, October-November 2009

were tired of Taliban harassment from Zangabad started to pass on information. That flow dramatically increased after a number of children were blown to pieces by a Taliban IED sometime after 22 October. Rutland did not have the combat power to take on or occupy the area, but this didn't stop C Company from dominating it as much as they could.[129]

BGen Vance had had his sights set on Nakhonay for some time. By no means a new problem, Nakhonay was known to have been part of the southwest ratline into Kandahar City as far back as 2005. Taliban were known to have taken refuge there after the Sarposa prison break of 2008, and insurgents were pushing west from Nakhonay to infect Dand District with violence. Since then, conflicting priorities had prevented TF Kandahar from establishing a permanent presence there. Regional Battle Group (South) had gone into Nakhonay and the Afghans had manoeuvred around the area, but all this activity amounted to nothing more than "emptying the garbage". Frankly, no one knew very much about the inhabitants of Nakhonay, but they and their friends were positioned to interfere with Operation KALAY. As KALAY II and III expanded west, something had to be done about Nakhonay.

Discussions between District Leader Haji Baran, Lt Col Baris and LCol Walsh produced vehement agreement on two major problems. First, there was a gap south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi, and the police patrol base at Three Tank Hill — the one with the ANP officers who would rather not serve as infantry — was not in position to control it. The community of Haji Habibullah was a staging point for movement between Zangabad and Sperwan Ghar to the west and the Nakhonay complex to the east. It also acted as some form of support node for enemy operations in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and something had to be done about that. The second major problem was Nakhonay itself; Baran "stressed the control that the Taliban have over Nakhonay and that if we do not keep a permanent force in the area, the Taliban will continue to control the local nationals."[130] BGen Vance concurred in his hand-over to BGen Ménard, and TF Kandahar ramped up its plans to deal with Nakhonay.

Capt Mike MacKillop and Recce Platoon were then tasked to conduct Operation EAGLE, a series of probes designed to figure out how the battle group and 2nd Kandak would get into Nakhonay. On 25 October, one of these probes resulted in a running battle that forced Recce Platoon to withdraw to Strong Point Gorgan. (For this action, among others, Capt MacKillop received the Medal of Military Valour.) More EAGLE probes helped develop the pattern of life in the area.

Superimposed on this were 'grasshopper' operations conducted by US Navy SEALS over a three-week period. A SEAL team would land by helicopter in a community, drop off aid, search, conduct a shura, and depart only to return seven or eight minutes later to the same location to see who emerged from the deep grape trenches in the area. These operations had significant psychological and shaping effects on the enemy cells in the area.[131]

The enemy intimidation campaign in Salavat was now in full swing. The Construction Management Organization showed up to hire local labourers to work on the roads while night letters were nailed to doors to intimidate the workers. A few mortar bombs were flung at patrols, to little effect. Eventually, enough information came in to develop a special operations strike on 26 October that either killed or severely wounded one of the major Taliban leaders operating south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi. On 28 October, however, an IED killed P-OMLT mentor Lt Justin Boyes of 3 PPCLI during a dismounted patrol south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi. On 30 October, Spr Steve Marshall of 11 Field Squadron tripped an IED near Zalakhan and died in the blast.[132]

While Operation EAGLE continued, the battle group mounted Operation ROAMING DEVIL into the Salavat-Mohajerin area. The tanks and A Company conducted a show of force against enemy intimidation so the Construction Management Organization could recruit more workers: 74 signed up. Then, all of a sudden, there was a major turnaround in Mohajerin:

> The people of Mohajerin told the [insurgents] to stop planting IEDs and to leave. The [insurgents] informed the villagers that they would stay and fight [the Afghans and Canadians] in the area. The villagers then regrouped with their women and children by moving them from the village at last light for their safety. The locals from Mohajerin stayed in their village most likely to defend it from the insurgents. [A Canadian infantry platoon] deployed in support of the local people and adopted blocking positions and over-watch.[133]

Patrols also discovered that people in Fathollah were friendly, and disliked the instability emanating from Chalghowr. IED tips started to come in across the whole area.[134]

EAGLE and ROAMING DEVIL were essential in shaping the environment for Operation HYDRA in Nakhonay, but serious problems remained unresolved. The main one was acquiring enough Afghan police to handle the Hold and Build parts of the operation. Pledges were made, but the realignment of the P-OMLT and the reduction of Canadian influence with the provincial administration may have played a role in reducing police enthusiasm for the project.[135]

The conditions for Operation HYDRA were eventually set by mid-November. The enemy, however, had been watching and waiting for some time for an offensive. With the battle group finally assembled, elements of A and C Companies accompanied by Hume's Leopard tanks breached in on 14 November. This force had eleven separate IED events in the first day before it secured the objectives adjacent to Route Lake Effect. This state of affairs kept Maj Trevor Friesen and his combat engineers busy. Between 20 and 30 more IEDs were discovered in the first 500 meters of ground. The Clear phase

was slow and included a near miss 'blue on blue' incident. It took nearly four days before D Company was able to deploy into their positions in Nakhonay, after passing through A Company's cleared route.[136]

The first shura was held on 21 November with Haji Baran present. The leader of Nakhonay, it turned out, was a man named Haji Malim. Almost nothing was known about him or how he related or connected to elders in the community. CIMIC and PSYOPS moved in with additional ISTAR resources to figure this out as rapidly as possible. Engineers started building platoon houses. D Company was in Nakhonay to stay.

The initial enemy reaction to HYDRA was to fall back to the south and lay more IEDs. ISTAR reportage suggested that, by occupying Nakhonay, the Canadians and Afghans "had degraded insurgents freedom of movement from Northern Panjwayi to Kandahar City." This in turn was assessed by TF Kandahar to have "created the conditions for the Build along Route LAKE EFFECT…as well as enabling the unhindered build and enable of Dand District." Another assessed effect was the complete drop off of IEDs along Route Hyena East.[137] Additionally, the move set up the battle group and 2nd Kandak to clear insurgents out of Chalghowr later in December on Operation DEVIL's STRIKE (an operation that led to some IED strikes against Badger AEV's but no other significant activity). When IED emplacers tried to mine Route Lake Effect on other occasions, they were taken out by armed UAVs.[138]

By the end of November, the Canadian intelligence apparatus was able to better define enemy activity in Panjwayi using all of its resources, which were now focused on one or two districts rather than four or five. There were essentially three separate but connected problems. First, and better defined after several years of operations, was the 28 Easting Line in the Sperwan Ghar area. Zangabad was the hub of all forms of enemy activity in the Horn, including parallel governance and it was supported through Mushan and points west as well as from the bomb-makers of Zharey. The enemy essentially had a defensive belt that ran north to south from the Arghandab River to the Reg Desert. Their forward operating zone was Sperwan Ghar. The second problem was the Nabi Network operating in the Sperwan Ghar-Bazaar-e Panjwayi area: it had a command node in Haji Habibullah and a logistics node that connected to Zangabad through Regay. This network focused on intimidation operations and IED facilitation.[139]

The third problem was Nakhonay. The KALAY operations dramatically altered the enemy's view of eastern Panjwayi. Nakhonay had been a way-station on a ratline, a place to cache weapons, and a safe harbour for insurgent cells projecting force and influence into Dand and Daman districts. Now, Nakhonay was a forward operating zone, the front line. There were two separate means for the enemy to support operations here. The first was through Emierin, which acted as a logistics node, with command and control in Gorgan.

The second, and more important, was the Adamzai Chain. Starting in the community of Molla Dust and continuing through Riglai Sofla, Kenjakak, Adamzai and all the way to Nakhonay, enemy weapons and fighters flowed in from Zangabad and all the way to Nakhonay. A separate network operated north of Route Lake Effect, with a command node in Fathollah and a ratline to support the Nabi Network to the west.[140] Insurgent leaders faced a challenge: What could they accomplish now that the situation in eastern Panjwayi had changed so much?

The Afghan and Canadian forces in Nakhonay, however, were still working on the Hold component of the operation well into December. The police forces necessary to assist with this phase did not arrive and the re-organization of the P-OMLT meant that D Company had to mentor the small number of Afghan police that arrived- none had gone through the Focused District Development process. There was an Afghan infantry company located in Haji Baba and it had Canadian mentors, but with the restructuring of the OMLT, there was turbulence in drawing it in to operations. By this time, D Company established and executed a day and night patrol plan.[141]

The Haji Baba community adjacent to Nakhonay was extremely cooperative and started to receive CIMIC and Construction Management Organization projects but all of a sudden it was "like someone turned a switch" and kidnappings and night letters started. Haji Malim, who welcomed D Company into Nakhonay during Operation HYDRA, it turned out, was playing a double game but more definition was required. ISTAR resources were focused on him and those around him to find out what exactly was going on.[142] Maj Niven and D Company wanted to extend KALAY-like programs to Nakhonay once the CIMIC teams had completed their assessment, but they were about to learn that there were major disconnects in that sphere and this had an impact on their ability to gain control of Nakhonay.

Changes in Development and Governance Programs in the Districts

As discussed in previous volumes, the task of getting aid and reconstruction resources from the government in Kabul to the provincial government in Kandahar, and then out to the districts and communities, was problematic. The structure established by 2009 did not function efficiently in Kandahar for a myriad of reasons.

We are already familiar with the National Solidarity Programme run by the Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development, and its system of Provincial Development Committees, District Development Assemblies, and Community Development Councils. We have also described the organizations formed by the Canadian contingent to support that process: the PRT, the CIMIC teams, the Construction Management Organization, and

the Specialist Engineer Team. Recall that Canadian organizations often helped the Afghans bridge gaps in the bureaucracy and in governance systems in order to ensure progress in the face of insurgent violence and corruption.

The main issue with delivery of services at the district and community levels was the lack of security. The key mechanisms that Canada fostered to assist in overcoming this problem were the Joint District Coordination Centres and the Police OMLT. The Joint District Coordination Centre plus the District Development Assembly brought development and security together at the district level. In almost all cases, however, the problem was district-level governance and the inability of the Afghan personalities to meld the JDCC and the DDA together so they could communicate with and effectively service the communities. In many cases, the problem was the relationship between the appointed provincial governor and his appointed district leaders on one hand, and aggrieved or disenfranchised parties on the other, be they tribal, commercial, or both. Naturally, these fissures fueled the local insurgency as well as facilitated external insurgent information operations and their narratives. In effect, there was a crisis of legitimacy at the provincial and district levels as well as the national level. The district governments could not deliver security, justice, and development at the community level and this fed the enemy's parallel governance structures which could provide these things locally, if not district-wide.

This state of affairs revealed a major fissure between the military coalitions on one hand, and the civilian developers in the non-governmental aid organizations and the international organizations on the other. As we have seen in Volume I, the aid organizations were skeptical of military forces and there remained substantial issues with integrating CIMIC activity and transitioning that to development projects. For the most part this was ideological, whereby the developers saw themselves as neutral entities to help 'the people', and the military coalitions were there in support of the government. This problem expressed itself at the provincial level during the development of Provincial Reconstruction Teams back in 2004-2005.

ISAF commanders and Canadian TF Kandahar commanders instinctively knew that the root of any counterinsurgency campaign lay at the local level but without the right security force density, persistent security was not possible. Now, with the American influx, a higher troop density was possible. As a result, a quiet reassessment of district and sub-district governance and development was underway throughout 2009 and new programs implemented, most of them funded from American and British sources but to some extent Canadian as well. Some of the mechanisms were tested discreetly. Others wound up going public which led to various levels of outcry. In any event, a competing system to the National Solidarity Program and its mechanisms emerged. In the same way

that there were different types of PRTs in 2004-2005, there was now going to be two different but overlapping district governance and development structures. This new system was progressively implemented in Kandahar from late 2009 and throughout 2010 and had a significant impact on Canadian operations over time.

The system had no real name and appeared to be a conglomeration of existing and new programmes. In reality, it was a parallel system designed to be discreetly introduced into critically threatened areas to get around NGO squeamishness and challenge Afghan provincial-level corruption. The system even played off of the Operation KALAY successes, something that was carefully observed by the new system's proponents.

An important aspect of the new system was how it evolved in parallel with the existing mechanisms (see Figure 6-6) but by augmenting existing capabilities. The new addition was the District Support Team which, in addition to other tasks, worked to mentor the District Leader and the District Development Assembly. The District Delivery Program established in March 2010 created line ministry representatives at the district level and then moved money to them. Both the District Support Team and the District Delivery Program in theory reduced the district leader's ability to influence how the money was dispersed and situated him in a structure where he was under scrutiny and could be held accountable.[143]

Another addition at the district level was the District Community Council which was like a 'security DDA' but in some cases the District Community Council took over from the dysfunctional development assemblies in some districts. Added in 2009, the DCC had three sub-committees: justice, security, and social. The Joint District Coordination Centre remained the coordination hub for the various security forces in their- day-to-day operations. Again, like the District Delivery Program, the District Community Council reduced the absolute power of the district leader and brought him into a systematized organizational framework. The District Community Council committees were supposed to use traditional and local dispute resolution mechanisms and reconcile them with the new justice system in order to reduce friction at the lowest level possible.[144]

Unlike the District Development Assembly, the District Community Council was part of the Afghan Social Outreach Program (ASOP), established in 2008. Where the District Development Assembly was connected to the Ministry of Rural Reconstruction, ASOP was responsible to the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), a 2007 creation by President Karzai intended to grip the district-level governance problem but which was beset with credibility issues from its inception: instead of having provincial governors appoint district leaders, the IDLG in Kabul did so, which potentially undermined the governor's authority…and the governors were appointed by Karzai in the first place. ASOP was in part intended to reinvigorate IDLG and became the funding mechanism for the District Community Council programmes.[145]

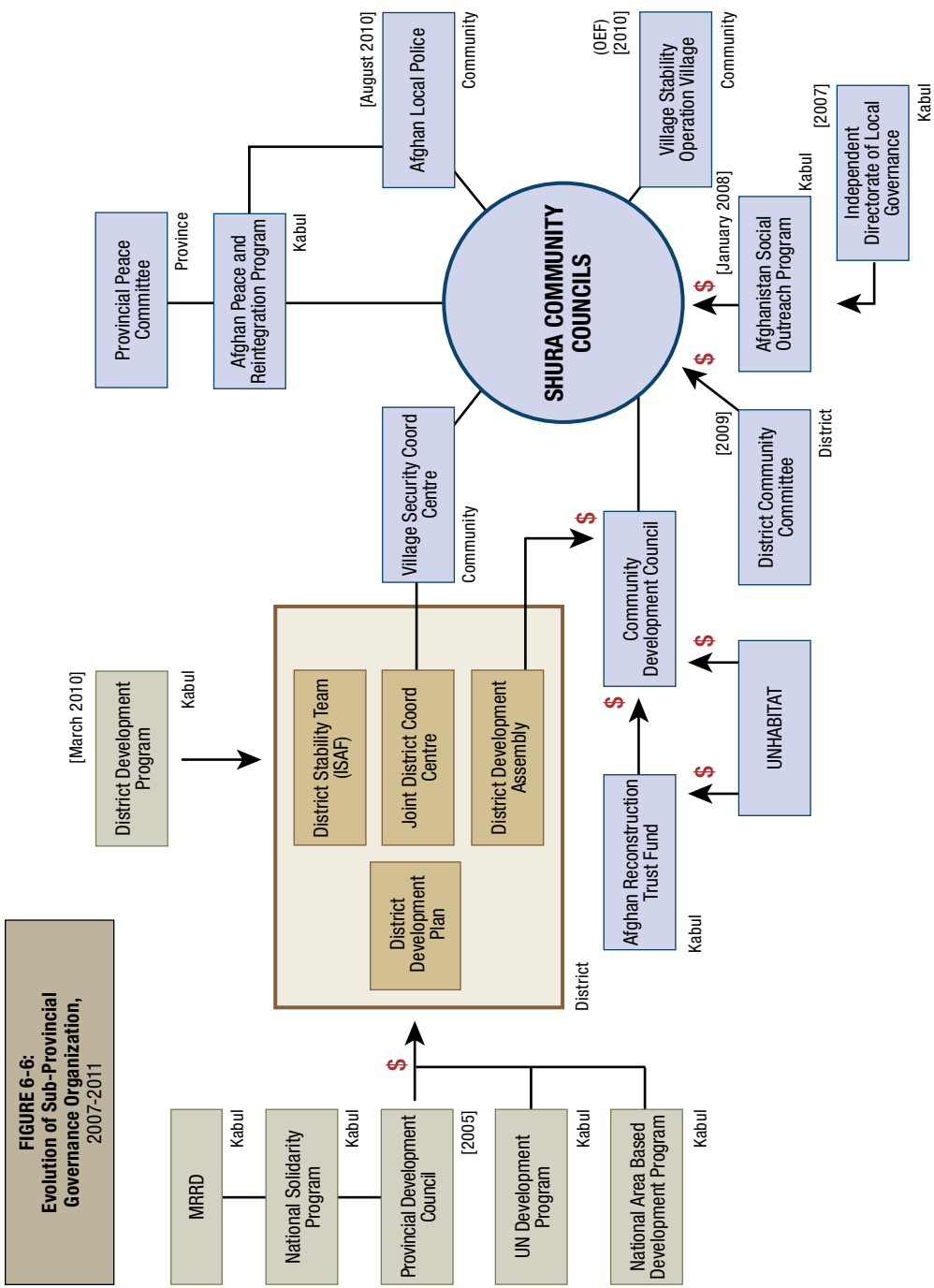

Figure 6-6: Evolution of Sub-Provincial Governance Organization, 2007-2011

There was overlap between ASOP activities and another structure/program called the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP) established in June 2010. Recall the long-defunct Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) and the Disarmament of Illegally Armed Groups (DIAG) programs, and the failed Peace Through Strength and Taliban reconciliation program. The APRP was designed to reconcile and reintegrate local Taliban fighters at the community and district-level. APRP was supported at the provincial-level by the Provincial Peace Council which combined the Taliban reconciliation function with the deployment of grievance teams to work in the districts to resolve local grievances using the District Community Council and other mechanisms. The Afghan Social Outreach Program was part of the vetting mechanism for the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program.[146]

The Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program also had a relationship to the most controversial new structure, the Afghan Local Police (ALP) which came on-line officially in August 2010 but had been tested out in various forms throughout 2009. The ALP concept was to develop a village militia vetted by community leaders, trained by special forces, but reporting to the district chief of police. With a Village Stability Coordination Centre, the Afghan Local Police were supposed to be able to resist Taliban intimidation at the community level and then call in district-level Afghan Uniformed Police and then the Army if the level of enemy force escalated above intimidation. There was a concept whereby the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program and Afghan Social Outreach Program could be used to reintegrate former local Taliban into the Afghan Local Police. Later on the umbrella term for this whole structure was Village Stability Operations (VSO) which were to be implemented in Key Terrain Districts (KTDs) which again looked very similar to Operation KALAY but with more policing.[147]

In the Canadian camp, there were high levels of skepticism in DFAIT and CIDA regarding the new structures and programs as they percolated in late 2009 and deployed in 2010. The Afghan Local Police and Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program were seen by some to be turning back the work done by the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration and Disarmament of Illegally Armed Groups program. Village Stability Operations raised the same objections that the original Provincial Reconstruction Teams did in that this was considered by some CIDA people to be 'politicization' of aid and a 'violation' of 'humanitarian space.' Foreign Affairs favoured building up the Afghan Uniformed Police and did not like 'militias,' especially ones that might be mentored by American special forces, which they viewed with some suspicion. What the critics failed to accept was that the fight in the districts was a community-level fight and that arms-length secular bureaucratic national and provincial-level programs were not going to address the realities of security, governance, and development in the communities.[148]

The Operational Mentor and Liaison Team in Late 2009

By October 2009, BGen Basir's 1-205 Brigade had swollen to six kandaks. 6th Kandak, now a specialized road-security unit, handled positions on Highway 1, while 1st Kandak operated from FOB Wilson. 3rd Kandak was based in Kandahar City and Arghandab District, while 2nd Kandak worked alongside the 1 PPCLI Battle Group in Panjwayi District. The Canadian OMLT led by Col Greg Burt continued to mentor all but 6th Kandak; American trainers arrived in mid-fall to embed with that unit.[149]

The primary issue was, as it had been throughout Canada's involvement with the Afghan army, the traditionally high absent without leave rates experienced by units and formations. In the case of 1-205 Brigade, Col Burt's staff estimated that 50 percent of the brigade was present, accounted for, and prepared for operations, while 25 percent was absent and the other 25 percent otherwise unprepared for operations.[150] The Afghan troops themselves were annoyed with the situation in the districts and disgusted by the behaviour of both local officials and some of their own leaders. This animosity clearly undermined their sympathy towards the population:

> The XO replied that patrolling amongst the population merely endangered that population. When asked about delivering humanitarian aid, the actual CO said that when they did that in Zharey, it was merely pawned off by the village leadership in Kandahar City.[151]

There were continuous interventions from authorities in Kabul. During the Eid holiday in September, all Afghan army units were ordered to stand down from operations and not leave their bases. This placed an additional burden on ISAF forces who had to back fill on those operations which in turn had negative effects on future plans.[152]

To complicate the situation further, 1-205 Brigade was deployed in districts that were under Canadian command and while others were deployed to districts under American command. Canadian mentors worked with Afghan army forces in American-commanded areas, while American mentors working with Afghan army forces worked alongside an American battalion that was under Canadian command. This did not always work seamlessly: there were different Canadian and American rules of engagement which generated friction into the fire support process, for example.

Continuing with the philosophy that 'every little bit helps,' Canadians from TF Kandahar worked through the OMLT with their 1-205 Brigade counterparts. This was particularly important in the counter-IED and medical areas. The TF Kandahar Brigade Surgeon initiated a basic medical course that was eight weeks long and trained 60 Afghan soldiers as medics.[153] Basic sanitation courses were also taught, but the low education levels of the Afghan troops made it difficult for them to comprehend the biology underlying the connection between unsanitary conditions and basic health.

One of the more annoying distractions came from Ahmad Wali Karzai's repeated attempts to get the Afghan army commanders in Kandahar to commit forces to the northern districts. These attempts started in early September and were routed through the provincial security steering committee. Karzai was partially successful in convincing the police leadership that the ANP should start operating in Khakrez District again, but the 1-205 Brigade deputy commander balked because 1-205 was busy in Arghandab. Governor Wesa then pushed for the permanent deployment of both police and army units to Khakrez. Ahmad Wali Karzai pressed further and argued that forces had to occupy the Khakrez community of Lam. Occupying Lam was critical, according to Karzai and Wesa. Karzai argued that forces based there could intercept enemy east-west movement between Helmand, Kandahar, and Oruzgan.[154]

BGen Vance was exceptionally concerned about this development. Kandahar City and its approaches were the priority, not Lam, not Khakrez.[155] Already stretched thin, the OMLT could not support operations outside the areas to which they were already committed. The Khakrez situation was essentially a repeat of the problems encountered by previous Canadian TF Kandahar commanders over Ghorak. The motives were likely the same: protection of (or interference with, depending on the circumstances) the narcotics smuggling route out of Helmand. The Afghan police commanders, however, were cajoled into deploying to Khakrez for 'elections security' in the event of run-off elections in November. That in turn drew in part of an Afghan army kandak, plus mentors. Col Burt and BGen Vance successfully resisted this plan throughout the fall of 2009, but ultimately an Afghan company with mentors deployed to Khakrez — but, fortunately, not to Lam.[156]

By October 2009, the six primary units of Brig Gen Basir's 1-205 Brigade were at Capability Milestone 1 or Capability Milestone 2: Brigade Headquarters, 2nd Kandak and 5th Kandak (the combat service support kandak) were at CM-1, fully capable of conducting operations, and 1st Kandak, 3rd Kandak and 4th Kandak stood at CM-2, capable of conducting operations with OMLT presence.[157]

In three years, the Canadian-mentored 1-205 Brigade progressed from the ability to operate at partnered platoon level within the context of a single battalion, to conducting mentored and some independent operations with three infantry battalions plus a combat support battalion, and a combat service support battalion. These units mounted their own security operations in Kandahar City and were losing life and limb trying to keep Highway 1 open. Once again, Canadian involvement in Afghan National Army mentoring was paying substantial dividends, despite drawbacks associated with the demographically-damaged Afghan culture and low education levels. Importantly, Canadian soldiers in the OMLT demonstrated day in and day out to their Afghan counterparts at all levels that Canada was part of the fight for their country.

Col Greg Burt rotated out in the fall of 2009 and a new OMLT came into Kandahar led by Col Shane Brennan. Brenann's team included leaders who had multiple tours in Afghanistan: Majors Derek Prohar, Steve MacBeth, Andrew Vivian and Alex Watson. Prohar became the chief staff while the others mentored the three rifle kandaks in 1-205 Brigade that were deployed in Arghandab, Kandahar City, and Panjwayi district (6th Kandak, the highway security kandak, was unmentored until American embedded trainers could be deployed). Col Brennan worked with Brig Gen Basir on a daily basis.

At this point, the Red-Yellow-Green readiness cycle established in 2007 was still officially in place but, as Col Brennan put it, "it really didn't matter because you had to be Green all the time."[158] Indeed, the idea that TF Kandahar could use the OMLT as some form of manoeuvre unit was long gone; Regional Command (South) was in control, and ISAF was taking a new approach to its engagement with the Afghan National Army. This approach, called "partnering," meant that each ANA kandak would partner with an ISAF battle group or battalion, and company-level mentors would be reassigned:

> The driving force behind the change was [MGen] Nick Carter … He needed to ruthlessly reassign NATO forces in his battle space and [had] a shortage of advisors and mentors for police functions. They were trying to drive us away from mentoring the Afghan army because "It's all done, it's all looked after, we want you to become police mentors."[159]

The "partnering" policy had the potential to dramatically affect how the Canadian OMLT handled its task. Brennan was extremely concerned and passed on to TF Kandahar that

> The issue for Canada is, this is tactically an operationally driven change with significant strategic inputs for our contribution. It must be remembered that it is not a top-down, driven NATO policy request. This is RC (South) commander's assessment being cloaked among ISAF's higher direction. Partnering is being touted as the solution to improving the Afghan National Army in all aspects, that mentoring is passé. I didn't agree with [partnering] … partnering meant dragging Afghans along on a mission that ISAF was running as opposed to mentoring them to do a mission.[160]

Some thought that partnering was directly related to pressure from President Karzai on Gen McChrystal to reduce civilian casualties and cut down on unilateral night raids by special operations forces. Others speculated that partnering allowed the Afghans to "share the heat" if anything went wrong during an ISAF operation.[161]

Brennan's main concern was that Canadian interests were not being protected. "Canada needs to stand firm on controlling very specifically how Canadian soldiers are employed." He was exceptionally concerned that "our troops would be handed over piecemeal to be commanded by other nations. Especially in Helmand." This was a constant theme during the Brennan OMLT's tour as the transition from mentoring to partnering slowly took effect, and resources needed for the Canadian-Afghan counterinsurgency fight in Kandahar were increasingly susceptible to redeployment elsewhere.[162]

Development and the PRT by Late 2009

PRT commander LCol Carl Turenne and PRT Director Jess Dutton worked steadily to improve cooperation between TF Kandahar and the other government departments — OGDs — while advancing development goals where they could.

Structurally, the PRT retained Stabilization Company A (Stab A) in Kandahar City and Stab B in Dand and Panjwayi districts. Each stabilization company now included a civilian Stabilization Officer from one of the OGDs. The P-OMLT, now part of the PRT, had four mentor teams deployed in Panjwayi and Dand districts, where they were incorporated into Stab B, and Zharey and Arghandab districts, where they operated independently. The Specialist Engineer Team and the Construction Management Organization under the PRT's operational command, a move designed to improve coordination in the districts. As we have seen, their tactical analogues were the Construction Management Teams.[163]

In Dand and Panjwayi, Stab B connected with the Joint District Coordination Centres, which transitioned into Operational Coordination Centers–District (OCC-Ds) —which were essentially the same thing with a new American name. In Kandahar City, each district now had a Municipal Support Office that acted as a District Development Assembly but in an urban setting. Stab A related to the Municipal Support Offices just as Stab B worked with the District Development Assemblies. A new organization, the OCC Kandahar City was under consideration, but how it related to the OCC-P was a matter of debate until June 2010 when they merged to form the Operational Coordination Center–Kandahar or OCC-K. What is important here in this new sea of acronyms was that there were security, development, and governance coordination bodies at all levels of government in Kandahar province, including Kanadhar City. Not all were functional, not all had permanent officers, but the PRT Stab companies worked to improve this state of affairs wherever they deployed in order to get this system working.[164]

The dominant *modus operandi* for the CIDA and DFAIT at the PRT was to work through and provide funding to other organizations and then claim success in the context of the measurement criteria established by Ottawa. For example, CIDA handed out Kandahar

Local Initiative Program money directly to two Afghan NGOs for nursery and playground rehabilitation, greenhouse growing schemes, and farmer self-help. CIDA money was also looped through the Integrated Alternative Livelihoods Program and then to aid organizations, including those that were part of the counter-narcotics effort.[165]

As we have seen in the last chapter, headway had been made with ISAF and UNAMA in reinforcing the UN agency presence in Kandahar City and coordinating those organizations with the PRT. UNICEF and WHO were conducting a (redundant) 'cluster assessment' of the water and sanitation system in the City, while the Office of Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid established an office. UNHCR worked with the Zharey Dasht IDP camp to process people for relocation. UN HABITAT also got involved with the Kandahar City water and sanitation project, which resulted in three international agencies assessing the same problem, at the same time.[166]

To what extent the Canadian departments could influence this activity or measure its effectiveness remained in question. If Canada gave money to the UN in New York, and the UN used a portion of that money from its funding to conduct programs in Kandahar, was that a Canadian success or not? The idea that allocating money to other non-Canadian organizations was a success in itself was at odds with what actually came out the other end in terms of improving the lives of Afghans in Kandahar, let alone attenuating the insurgency.

LCol Turenne believed that the PRT's primary successes by late 2009 included the polio eradication program, Correctional Services Canada's involvement with Sarposa Prison, and the improvement of the education system in Kandahar City. Another was the withdrawal of Canadian CIVPOL from the DynCorp-run Regional Training Centre and the increased emphasis on police officer training at the Camp Nathan Smith training centre.DFAIT's increased funding of police infrastructure in the City was another positive move and, paradoxically, the withdrawal of DFAIT money for Afghan police equipment forced the police to use their own logistics system. Only the Justice portfolio had nothing to boast about. The Department of Justice in Canada was uninterested in sending people to Kandahar, and little progress was made in this area beyond that made by the Canadian military PRT Legal Advisors in 2007–2008.[167]

Even the polio program's foundations were shaky. CIDA, who wanted to use the World Health Organization as an 'implementing partner,' ran into a brick wall:

> All [CIDA] did was give $10 million to WHO to aid their program. So when WHO was getting pressure by CIDA to say, "Hey, get into these areas" and blah blah blah, they were, like, "Oh, you're so sweet. Oh, how kind. Now go fuck yourself because we don't take orders from you." Patrick Oliver the WHO rep's exact words were "We thank you very much for your

> contribution to the WHO of this money. But you are a contributing partner. You don't actually set the priorities or tell us how to achieve this. We will work with you to be able to facilitate immunizations in this area, but CIDA doesn't have a say in how we do this."[168]

The Taliban exploited the situation for their purposes. They conducted "a campaign to disrupt the actual WHO, because the Taliban did not want WHO in the area doing immunizations. They didn't want anything positive happening for the people." To ensure that they could get into contested or controlled areas, "WHO would talk to the Taliban to ensure they could go in and do immunizations on certain days." What actually happened, however, was that "There's a lot of times they'd claim they did vaccinations, but they didn't. And how did they enforce that? They had no method of enforcing the vaccination [program]. And it's the office in Kandahar that's talking to two and three intermediaries before you get to the villager on the ground. And that couldn't get verified at all."[169]

As for the Dahla Dam project, SNC Lavalin, the overall Canadian contractor for dam refurbishment, needed a security force but had been told in Canada not to deal with any of the several security companies owned by Ahmad Wali Karzai. TF Kandahar patiently explained that dealing with Ahmad Wali Karzai was unavoidable as he held a monopoly on security company contracting in Kandahar.[170] Joint Task Force Afghanistan reported in mid-September 2009 that the dam road was 90 percent complete, but the Canadian implementing partner, the Central Asian Development Group's sub-contractor, had been fired and new bids solicited. The PRT approved a million-dollar contract with the Dastagiri Construction Company to finish the job.[171] These and other commercial factors slowed the project but, once the Dastagiri and Ahmad Wali Karzai factions of the Kandahar power structure were appeased, things seemed to pick up.

That said, the decision to integrate the dam project with other irrigation and water projects into the Arghandab Valley Integrated Development Vision took hold. Arghandab was billed "Afghanistan's breadbasket" and more and more connections were made between stabilizing Arghandab security and the AVIDV. The Dahla Dam project was redesignated the Arghandab Irrigation Rehabilitation Project and now linked into a regional development vision. Was it development or was it security? Was it both? Nobody was sure, but Canada had by this point sunk $50 million dollars and several lives into it, and then signed off on supporting it for another three years.[172]

Water supply was crucial to security in Kandahar City; disease could undermine all aspects of reconstruction and could easily be exploited by the insurgency. That Kandahar City had serious problems with potable water was known to CIDA as early as 2007. A CIDA-commissioned water study found that, because the river level was so low and the delivery systems inoperable, the aquifers under the city were either exhausted or contaminated.

In September 2009, cholera outbreaks were reported in Shah Wali Kot and Maywand and, although they were contained, it was only a matter of time before something similar happened in Kandahar City.[173]

Although public health was not ISAF's responsibility, it had unavoidable security implications. One problem lay in the belief by the Red Cross and some Canadian elements that the Chinese-funded Mirwais Hospital was somehow a neutral zone that security forces could not operate in. The reality was that Mirwais was an Afghanistan government facility, not a Red Cross safe haven, and it was understood that insurgents regularly used the facility for their purposes. Canadians mentoring the Afghan security forces and suggested that only the police should enter to conduct investigations.[174]

Overall, Canada lacked the capacity to evaluate and confront the problems surrounding the use of non-governmental organizations to perform government functions, especially the parasitical relationship between the insurgency and the various agencies delivering aid and development programs. This failure struck right to the heart of legitimacy and service delivery, and the problems associated with the nature of the conflict. Canadians in Afghanistan were not peacekeepers and Canada was not neutral, yet the legitimacy of the Afghan government was eroded from within by factionalism, profiteering, corruption, and by ceding too much power to outside organizations. It is this deepening mire that the Canadians at the PRT sought to navigate using the flawed strategic framework of priorities and projects. At the very least, the PRT and CIMIC provided a window through which to view parasitical insurgent activity and commercial rivalries and try and keep track of it with the White Situational Awareness organizations.

Despite the successes, we cannot paper over the fact that there were severe personality conflicts and major ideological differences at all levels of the Canadian development, reconstruction and governance endeavor in Kandahar.[175] Turenne and his team were increasingly seen as Stockholm Syndrome victims by elements in the incoming TF Kandahar headquarters and the painstaking relationship building that took place and the incremental steps forward in 2009 eventually culminated by early 2010.

Command Changes, November 2009: From Vance to Ménard, from De Kruif to Carter

By mid-November, it was time for the Vance team to conduct a relief in place with its successor headquarters led by BGen Daniel Ménard. Based on 5e Groupe-brigade mécanisé du Canada, the new TF Kandahar brought with it the new OMLT led by Col Shane Brennan. LCol Turenne remained in command of the PRT, and 1 PPCLI Battle Group under LCol Jerry Walsh continued its tour with TF Kandahar as the task force battle group.

A new Canadian Helicopter Force Afghanistan contingent led by Col Christian Drouin also arrived at this time. The new National Support Element led by LCol Jim Jensen arrived in October, and Maj Lisa Elliott led a new rotation at the All Source Intelligence Centre starting in November.

Over at Regional Command (South), Maj Gen Nick Carter of the British Army and a headquarters dominated by 6 (UK) Division took over from the Dutch-led multinational headquarters. One of Maj Gen Carter's first moves was to realign his forces in Kandahar Province, in particular the troubled Stryker Brigade. In only four months in Arghandab District, 1-17 Infantry had lost 22 soldiers and the battalion leadership could not agree on whether they were supposed to be conducting counterinsurgency or counter-guerilla operations. Critics were even calling the Stryker Brigade the "Motor Rifle Regiment" because of what some assessed to be an emphasis on heavy-handed tactics. During this debate, one 1-17 Infantry company commander was fired and his brigade commander, Col Harry Tunnell, argued frequently with Maj Gen Carter about the Stryker Brigade's operational methods. Carter pulled the Stryker Brigade out of the south and centre of Arghandab District and reassigned its battalions to the task of maintaining freedom of movement on main service routes. Canadian diplomat Neil Clegg, who originally deployed as a policy advisor with the Stryker Brigade, was reassigned to the PRT. 2-508 Parachute Infantry Regiment, also known as Task Force 2 Fury, replaced the Stryker Brigade in Arghandab.[176]

The creation in Kabul of a new NATO headquarters called ISAF Joint Command led to other changes that affected Regional Command (South) and TF Kandahar.[177] The first act of ISAF Joint Command was to issue a standing operational order (IJC OPORD 001-2009 OP OMID) setting out a common concept of operations for the entire combined and joint operations area.

This construct consisted of five lines of operations throughout phase 3 of the strategic NATO campaign, spanning late 2009 to late 2010. The operational goal was to gain the initiative, but the exact wording was obscure. The five lines of operation were complemented by a set of supporting concepts, 17 in total, spanning from partnering, to reintegration and medical support. The tactical concepts of Shape, Clear, Hold and Build were explained in paragraphs, and the tactical succession of these was explained. The components were not summed up into a theater-wide operational concept of operation and stood more or less alone, and with no real priority assigned.

As we have seen, the key change was in 'partnering' with the Afghans at all levels.[178] There were others. ISAF Joint Command also introduced the "deep dive", a focused study of particular districts, communities, or groups of communities to act as a bellwether on progress. Another was a new directive on monitoring corruption. Ultimately these changes significantly increased the level of staff activity at TF Kandahar in order to meet

the reporting demands which in turn had an impact on the finite staff capacity available to the headquarters.[179] Pre-deployment training had not prepared the headquarters team for the reality they faced.

Maj Gen Carter also altered the operational planning concept for Regional Command (South). In the planning realm, Carter altered the RC (South) operational planning concept. Operation MOSHTARAK, as it was called, emerged initially from British concerns, amplified through the De Kruif-led Regional Command (South) headquarters, that Marjah district was an emergent enemy node that was detrimental to the survival of the Helmand provincial government in Lashkar Gah. That was back in June 2009.[180] Carter's approach was governed by a number of themes, of which the most important was that ISAF had to:

> … support the re-establishment of the political organs at all levels. And make them accountable. And [to] have them be accountable, let them be accountable to themselves and to their people [and] ultimately break the cycle of corruption that was beyond the normally socially acceptable corruption that goes on in Afghanistan … break the culture of impunity cycle.[181]

As BGen Ménard came to understand it, however, the battle being fought by ISAF and Afghan forces in Helmand Province was in effect a covering-force fight for Kandahar Province, and thus Kandahar City. Resources would be weighted to Helmand for the covering-force part, and then shifted to Kandahar. The overall plan would have its first two phases in Helmand, and phases 3 and 4 in Kandahar.[182]

Planning Under Ménard: Toward Operation WADANA WAL

The Vance headquarters' intent was that the incoming TF Kandahar would take Operation KANTOLO and the KALAY series and continue on that trajectory. 1 PPCLI Battle Group and the OMLT were already positioned to do so and were in the middle of Operation KALAY III. KALAY I and KALAY II were progressing well with Stab B, the P-OMLT, the Construction Management Organization, and the Specialist Engineer Team. Operations in Kandahar City were also going well, with Stab A, the OCC-P and the 97th MP Battalion taking the lead in ensuring municipal and provincial government activities were well-supported. The American forces in Arghandab District, particularly the Stryker Brigade, were having a rough go with IEDs but nevertheless expelled the insurgents from critical parts of the district, especially areas close in to the city. Spin Boldak was as secure as it could be. And, as it had been in the past, it was unclear from the outset to the Ménard headquarters team how much of Regional Command (South)'s resources would be transferred to Helmand with a British officer in command.

That said, Regional Command (South) instructed TF Kandahar to prepare for a realignment of unit boundaries and to take tactical control of some American units. The new TF Kandahar area of operations included Kandahar City, Dand District, eastern Panjwayi District, south and eastern Zharey, southern Arghandab and part of Daman. TF 2 Fury would take over from 1-17 Infantry in Arghandab District and come under Kandahar control by the end of December. As for partnering, Regional Command (South) was still unclear on how it wanted it handled and basically said, "Wait. Out."[183]

The changes at Regional Command (South) and the character of the incoming American forces meant that BGen Ménard's headquarters team faced an operational reality for which their pre-deployment training had not prepared them. Consequently, TF Kandahar planning was still in flux well into December, and Ménard's deputy, Col Simon Hetherington, prompted him to issue interim planning guidance so the units of the task force could at least continue on the trajectory set by BGen Vance. Unwilling to accept this compromise, Ménard was not happy wih the situation and told Hetherington that the existing plans were null and void.[184] During that time, the staff were not allowed by BGen Ménard to use the words KANTOLO or KALAY in the headquarters building, or to discuss KANTOLO's operating concept. They were instructed to come up with something different. At the same time, however, LGen Marc Lessard at CEFCOM warned Ménard not to modify KANTOLO because of the "scar tissue" generated by friction with the other government departments during its creation in early 2009.[185]

When it was issued on 12 December, the Ménard planning guidance stickhandled around the Other Government Department problem and asserted that the main effort and mission success lay in "the establishment and successful maintenance of the perception of security" for the population of Kandahar City. To achieve this, TF Kandahar would establish a "Ring of Stability" in the districts west of the city as a barrier to the insurgents. Stability was defined as "an atmosphere of order … within which responsible government can function effectively and measurable progress [is] achieved." Each district was to have, a "battle space commander" who would achieve the aim by applying Define-Shape-Clear-Hold-Build-Enable (the newest version of Clear-Hold-Build) to communities within their area of operation. The key communities were initially Nakhonay, Salavat, Asheque and Senjaray.[186]

Outside of the Ring of Stability, TF Kandahar and 'higher assets' were to conduct disrupt and interdiction operations. This was to be called the 'deep battle' space. Importantly, Ménard strongly emphasized in his guidance that all activities were to be centrally coordinated and planned at the Task Force Kandahar level "with priorities established by me and nested within the operational design of Regional Command (South) … no operations or initiatives will be planned or executed in isolation."[187]

Under the direction of the Chief of Staff, LCol Craig Dalton, the headquarters team rapidly came up with a plan they informally called "KANTOLO on steroids" or "KANTOLO PLUS" and then later, WADANA WAL (Progress) (see Figure 6-7). It was understood that it was not the summer fighting season, so major operations against insurgents were out of the question. Dand was successful, Panjwayi district was showing progress in certain areas. Zharey district was an enemy sanctuary with constant violence. Operations in Arghandab and lower Shah Wali Kot were believed to be successful. Given this state of affairs, the general idea was to have a "Ring of Stability" in place west of the City in Dand, eastern Panjwayi, and Arghandab, with everything west of that designated a "Deep Battle" zone. Define-Shape-Clear-Hold-Build–Enable would continue to be the operating methodology to secure the communities within the 'Ring' that had not received attention thus far. As well as those named in Ménard's guidance, the expanded list of target communities included the Dand villages; Belanday, Nakhonay and Bazaar-e Panjwayi in Panjwayi District; Senjaray in Zharey District; and Jelawur in Arghandab.[188]

The Ring of Stability described in the new plan essentially took KALAY III and pushed north into Senjaray. That left Jelawur. And, as we have seen, Jelawur was in Arghandab which was a Stryker Brigade responsibility, not TF Kandahar. At the time, however, thought was given to withdrawing the Stryker Brigade units from Arghandab and having the 'Embedded Training Team' battalion, 2-508 Parachute Infantry, assume responsibility, possibly under Canadian command.[189]

An additional and highly significant change was LGen Lessard's move to extract CEFCOM from the intricacies of tactical and operational planning in Kandahar Province. Lessard stopped work on any CEFCOM campaign planning for Afghanistan in Ottawa and told TF Kandahar that the campaign plan was the RC (South) campaign plan.[190] As KANTOLO PLUS was refined in late December, the plan now had to respond to Regional Command (South)'s new operations order. That conflicted with Ménard's direction that the new Canadian plan was to be unique.[191]

While the headquarters relief in place was under way at TF Kandahar, a similar process was going on at Regional Command (South). Maj Gen Carter was beginning his second tour in Afghanistan, having served on the American staff of CJTF-180 in 2002, and had more recently completed a command tour with the British contingent based at Basra, Iraq. His British-dominated headquarters still had a number of Canadians in it but "strong personality conflicts" resulted in the early resignation and departure of BGen Gerry Champagne, the Canadian deputy commander for strategic effects, and the arrival of BGen Craig King to replace him.

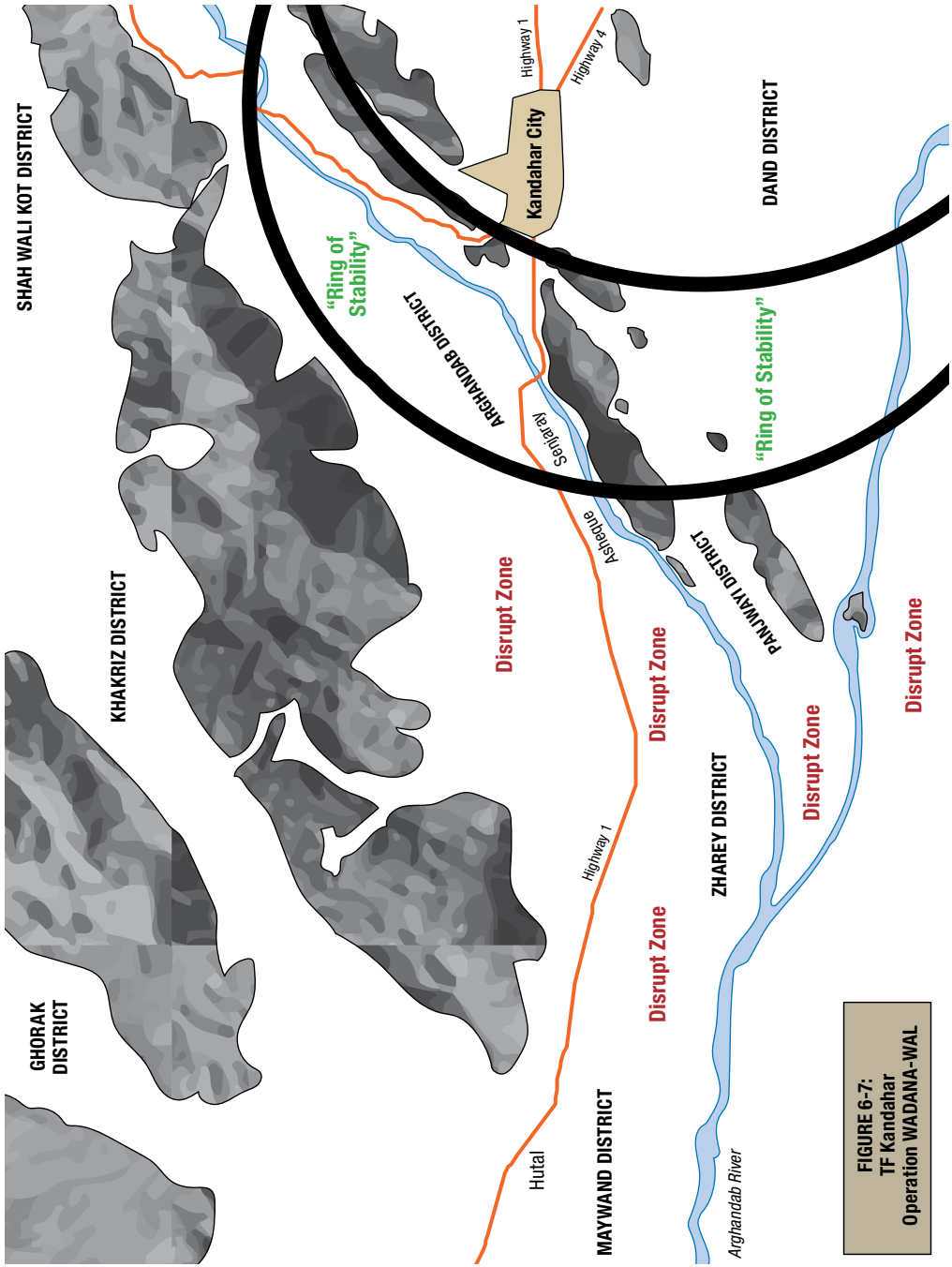

Figure 6-7: TF Kandahar Operation WADANA WAL

Yet another important change that November was the dissolution of the Regional Battle Group (South), previously used for disrupt operations in Kandahar Province. The American influx, particularly the increased number and variety of special operations forces that were arriving, meant that a light infantry unit was no longer required to handle the disrupt function in the province. The deployment of the various RBG(S)'s over the past two years to Kandahar went a long way to demonstrate that there remained tight army-to-army professionalism at the unit level between Canada and the UK, no matter what the politics were vis-à-vis Regional Command (South), Helmand province, and Kandahar province.

Task Force Kandahar planning clashed with the new RC (South) planning, in part because of poor personal relationships that developed at a number of levels. The nub of the problem, as it emerged, was that TF Kandahar resisted Regional Command (South) over several fundamental issues. The problems were, as before, the relationship between Helmand and Kandahar provinces in the larger scheme of the war, British versus Canadian interests, and how these factors related to resource allocation. This was all aggravated by the American influx, which was massive.

On another level, there was Carter's plan, MOSHTARAK, and Ménard's plan, WADANA WAL. Ménard later rationalized the relationship between the two and conceded that MOSHTARAK and WADANA WAL could, in fact, complement each other; MOSHTARAK was doing for RC (South) what WADANA WAL was doing for Kandahar province. Ménard understood that his Ring of Stability had to be in place before the summer fighting season started because he wanted fighting age males 'off the street' working on development projects and not subject to the predations of the Taliban. He also wanted local businesses in action providing basic needs so there was an air of stability. Therefore, his Ring of Security had to be established beforehand. The timings for this conflicted with the allocation of ISR, helicopters, engineering, SOF, and other resources to MOSHTARAK.[192]

In addition, some of the Canadian planners believed that Kandahar City might, under RC (South), become "Iraqized" into becoming a "Green Zone" like parts of Baghdad.[193] When Regional Command (South) directed TF Kandahar to review its Kandahar City Security Plan, the staff checked in with their Afghan military and police counterparts, who reported they were happy with the existing plan which consisted of random checkpoints, joint patrols, and access-control points on the city perimeter. The Carter headquarters, taking their cue from Basra or possibly Kabul in 2002–2003, wanted a ring of checkpoints surrounding the city. The Afghans still preferred the plan they had developed on their own with the Canadians in the background. Regional Command (South) told TF Kandahar to "make them" conform to the Regional Command (South) plan.

Informed by Col Hetherington's experience with Kandahar City security issues from Operation PORTCULLIS, the Canadian commanders resisted and escalated the matter to the Ministry of the Interior, where it died.[194]

There were other examples of Regional Command (South) thinking that, according to TF Kandahar planners, "drove them crazy" because they were unconnected with the reality that was handed off to them by the Vance headquarters. In one case, a Canadian officer saw the Regional Command (South) commander personally selecting the sites for checkpoints on a map.[195] Fundamentally, however, each headquarters team misunderstood the other. Under Maj Gen de Kruif, Regional Command (South) was "a multinational headquarters with no teeth" or a "coordinating headquarters," and TF Kandahar did what it wanted. Carter viewed Regional Command (South) as a divisional "command" headquarters and TF Kandahar as a brigade commanded by it.[196] This issue, and others, came out later under the pressure of Operation MOSHTARAK and during the reorganization of the OMLT.

The Ménard Reorganization

The entire Canadian joint task force was completely re-organized in December 2009. BGen Ménard later characterized these changes as crucial steps necessary because of the changing reconstruction/developmental landscape on one hand, and the incoming American forces on the other.[197] The reorganization was also driven by Ménard's penchant for doctrinal coherence, and it eventually had both positive and negative effects on Canadian operations.

The Provincial Operations Centre, established in the Canadian compound at Kandahar Air Field in 2007 which then became the Kandahar Provincial Operations Centre in 2008 and begat the Joint Provincial Operations Centre in 2009, was confusingly re-named the TF Kandahar Tactical Operations Centre (confusing because the battle group retained its own TOC in another compound). The TF Kandahar Tactical Operations Centre was the repository of 'deep battle' aerial strike operations: this responsibility had been weighted towards the Kandahar Joint Provincial Operations Centre and away from the battle group's operations centre under Vance, but was fully shifted to the new TF Kandahar Tactical Operations Centre by Ménard. That change forced the battle group to 'bid' for UAV resources from TF Kandahar. The special relationship established in 2008 between Maj Jay Adair and the American UAV units was now dissolved. The TF Kandahar Tactical Operations Centre remained responsible for higher engineer and air asset coordination and deconfliction as it had since the beginning. All of these functions became even more critical as more units entered the battlespace and thus more personnel were required. When the Ménard headquarters took over, the TF Kandahar operations centre was responsible for the Canadian battle group, and the American 1-12 Infantry battalion, plus the Canadian units in the City. It also had to interact with the Stryker Brigade unit in Arghandab,

1-17 Infantry. Over the course of the next five months, Task Force Kandahar had to coordinate and sometimes command the operations of those two units plus TF 2 Fury (the 2-508 battalion from the 82nd Airborne); 97th MP Battalion, 1-71 Cavalry Squadron (an American recce unit cut to TF Kandahar in April 2010) and later TF 1 Fury in June which replaced 1-17 Infantry. It also had to coordinate with the four 1-205 Brigade rifle or security kandaks.[198]

This workload was never anticipated in the Ménard headquarters' pre-deployment training, so the TOC staff had to adapt to it on the job. Ménard was concerned that the Americans would refuse to place their units under Canadian command if they could not interact with doctrinally familiar structures, so he ordered headquarters branches responsible for engineering, signals and aviation to be restructured and renamed. For example, the TF Kandahar Engineer Regiment brought all of the Canadian engineering resources under a single commanding officer and became a brigade resource that could be used to support American units that were under Canadian control. Having a new American staff visitor deal with a Signals Squadron was easier to deal with than a mere headquarters staff position.[199]

The J5 branch was significantly altered, in part to reflect the new and increased reporting demands that came in under McChrystal and collaterally with Carter's Regional Command (South) headquarters. J5 still handled Afghan National Security Force development, information operations, White Situational Awareness, and operations analysis. Added to these functions were an assessment cell, more cultural analytical capacity, and strengthened development and political "connective tissue" in the wake of the incremental centralization of PRT capabilities at TF Kandahar at Kandahar Air Field.

A new organization called Brigade Troops was also established by the Ménard headquarters. Changes at the PRT resulted in the transfer of Stab A company, CIMIC, and PSYOPS to Brigade Troops under the command of LCol Marc Fortier, who was double-hatted as Chief of Fires at the TF Kandahar Tactical Operations Centre.[200] Brigade Troops also took over SUAV operations as well. Stab A continued operations but now was tasked by the PRT Commander to handle mobility and protection of the other government department personnel, as the Protection Company had in the past. Stab A patrols in Kandahar City also ended with the PRT reorganization.[201]

One of the biggest changes was the re-organization of TF Kandahar's engineering units into a Task Force Kandahar Engineer Regiment. The new Force Engineer, LCol Jennie Carignan, now commanded all organizations less the battle group field squadron. The Construction Management Organization and the Specialist Engineer Team were merged into the Engineer Construction Squadron, and Construction Management Teams 1 and 2 were transformed, with the addition of more personnel, into four Engineer Construction Teams (ECTs).

When the Provincial Reconstruction Team was re-organized, an infantry-based Engineer Recce Troop was also created so that the TF Kandahar had a protected and mobile engineering recce capability. This was necessary so that TF Kandahar could verify and handle quality control for the myriad of contracted engineering projects that the PRT government departments funded but lacked the protected ability to assess. The Geospatial Support Team techs at the PRT were also re-patriated to Kandahar Air Field and the whole map-making structure rationalized. At the very least this centralized the minefield database, which was spread over three different organizations. By May 2010, the ANA Engineer Advisor Team working at Camp Hero was also brought under the Force Engineer. Finally, mine dog teams, a contracted capability, were also placed under the Force Engineer. Counter-IED operations were also re-organized.[202]

Ménard and his team also consolidated Military Police operations, putting the TF Kandahar Provost Marshal in command of the MP Company (which absorbed the P-OMLT) and the Canadian Forces National Investigative Service detachment. The move to the Provost Marshal was the P-OMLT's third command change in less than a year, and it was done because some believed that the stabilization companies had misused the P-OMLT for light infantry tasks instead of police mentoring. Unfortunately, the P-OMLT needed transport and maintenance support that the MP Company did not have the resources to provide, so their sortie rate dropped dramatically.[203]

The concept of the Battle Space Commander (BSC) progressively came into vogue during the Ménard re-organization. Each district that WADANA-WAL operated in generally conformed to the area of operations of one of the battalions or battle groups. In time 1-12 Infantry was assigned the Battle Space Commander for Zharey, 1 PPCLI Battle Group for Panjwai and Dand, and 97th MP Battalion for Kandahar City. The idea was to cut CIMIC, Engineer Construction Squadron, and Police OMLT resources from Task Force Kandahar right to the districts. This meant, of course, cutting out the Provincial Reconstruction Team and working directly with the districts. It was also considered an arrogant move by some Canadians who worked closely with the Afghan army and police forces and was seen by others as giving up hard-fought ground in the mentoring sphere. Shouldn't the Afghans be the 'battle space commanders' in their country? Was that not what Canada was supposed to be moving towards?[204] On the other hand, Afghan command and control was also in a state of flux as the Afghan army was in the process of restructuring to being two brigades into Kandahar province and a firm foot on the ground was needed during this change. This in turn related to the substantial changes in OMLT operations that were to follow.[205]

Turbulence at the PRT

The linchpin of the Ménard reorganization was the Provincial Reconstruction Team and how it was perceived by him and others in the greater scheme of the Canadian effort in Kandahar. There were two key aspects of this problem. The first was the clash of philosophies: stabilization versus development. In some ways this was a re-boot of the projects versus programs problem that we have already seen through previous rotations going back to Kabul in 2003. In their deployment work-ups in 2009, the Ménard headquarters saw all the gory details of the civil-military GRIZZLY-KANTOLO struggle as it played out. Some were skeptical about the efficacy of development in an insecure environment. There was already a bias against development partly brought on by the poor reputation of other government departments that permeated the ranks of their colleagues coming back from previous tours.[206]

The second key aspect was the decreasing saliency of Task Force Kandahar going into 2010. As we have seen, the Provincial Reconstruction Team was a subordinate unit of TF Kandahar while TF Kandahar was the primary ISAF military entity for the province as it had been since 2006. With the American influx, TF Kandahar was no longer the sole military focal point for ISAF in the province. There was Stryker Brigade, the Afghan Regional Security Integration Command police units, increased numbers of SOF and so on. TF Kandahar was reduced to three districts, one of which was controlled by an American unit under Canadian command. In other words, TF Kandahar no longer had provincial-level saliency but the PRT, because it was working on provincial-level development, did.[207]

As a result of this and other factors, the Representative of Canada in Kandahar, Ben Rowswell, decided to move from KAF to Camp Nathan Smith. It was increasingly evident that the Canadian civilian efforts in Kandahar at the PRT were now becoming "Embassy forward" and progressively disconnected from TF Kandahar operations. Ménard's attitude, according to members of his staff, was best summed up as "I don't give a fuck what the civilians are doing."[208] This led to what was unofficially known as "the divorce".

When less emotional analysis was employed later, it was clear that the American influx had a substantial civilian component that was more action-directed in the districts and less focused on provincial level projects, though they also brought a lot of programs to bear at the provincial level as well. The American aid component was perceived by Ménard to be more closely aligned with TF Kandahar's district and village-centric operations than what Ben Rowswell and company were doing at the PRT, and it was more likely that the Ménard headquarters would gravitate to those who shared similar objectives.[209]

Stab A, as we have seen, remained at Camp Nathan Smith as an armoured taxi service for the other government departments, but under TF Kandahar control. Stab B became CIMIC Company and was transferred out of PRT control. The CIMIC Operations Centre

moved to Kandahar Air Field and the five teams in the CIMIC Company deployed to Panjwayi, Dand, and Kandahar City. CIMIC became responsible for quick impact projects and were removed from development programming. The CIMIC teams worked with the communities in the districts to define the projects and these were handed off to the Engineer Construction Squadron for implementation. The PRT was now out of the loop completely at the district level.[210]

As a former PRT commander, TF Kandahar's deputy commander Col Hetherington was seriously alarmed by this point and concluded that Ménard was out of his depth. It was increasingly evident to him that Ménard did not comprehend the complex nature of the Kandahar political and social environment or the delicate mechanisms that Canada had created to interact with them. Doctrinal structures may be fine in a staff college environment, but were not necessarily useful in Kandahar in the middle of a war.[211]

Yes, there were serious problems in the civil-military relationship. Yes, Canadian strategy was convoluted and perhaps ill-suited to rapidly changing circumstances. The idea that TF Kandahar could go it alone in the districts without any governance or development leverage at the provincial level was, in a word, unsound despite the problems with CIDA and DFAIT.

LCol Carl Turenne, still in command at the PRT, opposed the Ménard reorganization and fought for three long months to hold onto the tenuous strands built in 2009 between the soldiers and their civilian counterparts at Camp Nathan Smith. Turenne was, however, fighting a losing battle. The incoming American deputy PRT director, Bill Harris, was a highly-experienced man who understood from years in Colombia and other conflict zones how raw power was wielded. Harris had access to financial resources that overwhelmed the PRT and threatened to seriously reduce Canadian saliency on the developmental front. At the same time, the leadership at Regional Command (South) as well as the Americans were reporting that Task Force Kandahar under Ménard "has limited the focus of the PRT" and that focus had expanded for the upcoming Operation MOSHTARAK series.[212] As LCol Turenne noted:

> The U.S. were coming in with a view to win, "we will achieve effects to win." And Ottawa said, "Well, we're pulling out in 2011 so slack off on the pedal there … you guys aren't getting any additional funding." USAID was coming in with funding envelopes of $300 million … Meanwhile, we're saying, "Can CIDA get another fifteen, twenty million dollars to fill up the KLIP [Kandahar Local Initiatives Program]?" No. How about another two or three people with a bit of money so we can be more proactive and be more responsive to the counterinsurgency on the ground? Oh, God forbid, no. Jim Melanson and Jess Dutton [applied] pressure up their chains [of command] to get more funding and more people … [No], we're good. Six Canadian priorities, three signature projects. We don't need to do more.[213]

Ménard believed that Turenne and Rowswell were operating on obsolete assumptions based on what had happened in 2009 and not what was going to happen in 2010.[214] He moved LCol Craig Dalton in to replace Turenne in early February 2010. Under Dalton the military component was reduced to Stab A, what was termed "PRT Life Support", and a small but effective organization called 'ASIC Forward'. With the Construction Management Organization, the Specialist Engineer Team and the P-OMLT gone, Ménard argued, there was no real need for a military headquarters at the PRT.[215] Indeed, there was a prevailing attitude that if departments like CIDA and DFAIT wanted control so badly, fine. But not over military resources. They could ask the Americans for protected transport to Dahla Dam if they really needed it.

LCol Joe Pospolita eventually replaced Dalton and became a "military advisor" (MILAD) to the Representative of Canada in Kandahar at the PRT and, after nearly five years, the Army's command function at Camp Nathan Smith disappeared. Pospolita's brief from Hetherington, who was concerned about Ménard's excesses regarding the PRT, was to "get [the PRT] squared away and make it work" and continue to act as 'glue' for the other government departments, who were sure to be at loose ends with the reorganization. Stab A remained *in situ* to provide protected transport.[216]

The All Source Intelligence Centre (Forward) started as a few people assigned to the PRT to maintain databases associated with the collection activities of the other government departments. With the "divorce," however, the J2 at TF Kandahar realized that a more robust analytical component was necessary to support the other departments. The All Source Intelligence Centre under Maj Lisa Elliott already had civilian personnel from DFAIT, DND and other departments to handle database work, so Maj Elliott and her staff swiftly converted this group into an analysis team. Major John McLearn was then tasked to run what became known as ASIC (Forward) (This organization became crucial in events in Kandahar City throughout the remainder of 2010 and its operations are discussed in the following chapter).[217]

Task Force Kandahar was not completely out of the PRT business or out of Camp Nathan Smith yet, but its involvement in higher-level development and governance in the province was well on the wane. By March 2010 the civilian-led PRT aligned with Regional Command (South) and with what some hoped would be a regional "super PRT", the Regional Platform (South).[218]

The OMLT: Changes on the Horizon

As we have seen Colonel Shane Brennan and the OMLT were exceptionally concerned about the shift from mentoring to partnering. ISAF commander General McChrystal, after several visits to observe Canadian OMLT and battle group activities, liked what he saw and looked at the possibility of moving beyond specialized mentor units and examined the wholesale partnering of Afghan army formations, units, and sub-units with ISAF formations, units, and sub-units.[219] In late August, he issued the Partnering Directive:

> ISAF has routinely planned and conducted combined operations with the [Afghan national security forces], referring to them as partnered operations. These "partnerships" were temporary, and ended when ISAF and ANSF returned to their separate forward operating bases upon completing an operation.[220]

McChrystal wanted to see a philosophical change whereby ISAF and ANSF units lived, worked, and planned side-by-side at all levels, even down to platoon. This was to be called "embedded partnering". Each side would draw on the strengths of the other. The Afghan security forces were to be "the supported command" with ISAF as the "supporting command".[221]

McChrystal was driven by a strategic imperative. In American circles, there was a push for the concept of "Transfer" to be built into any new Afghan strategy, that is, from Clear-Hold-Build to Clear-Hold-Build-Transfer whereby ISAF should start turning over responsibility for security in certain parts of the country to the Afghan government. At the same time, the more areas that could be transferred over the next year could also be used as a measurement of effectiveness to demonstrate to critics that there was progress. It could also be a signal to the Afghan power structure that ISAF was not going to remain engaged indefinitely.[222] And by November 2009 President Hamid Karzai chimed in and announced "his ambition to have Afghan security provided entirely by Afghans by the end of his term in 2014."[223]

To that end, NATO re-organized how it handled training and mentoring in Afghanistan. That rationalization occurred at the end of November 2009 when the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A) stood up in Kabul. The creation of NTM-A was part of a more comprehensive policy that brought embedded partnering into the fold. In many ways NTM-A was a NATO version of Combined Security Assistance Transition Team-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) but how the two related was initially ill-defined. The definition problem in turn related to the creation of yet another new NATO headquarters, the ISAF Joint Command, which was created as a subordinate headquarters to ISAF HQ. The IJC commanded the ISAF Regional Commands but also was to act as a "partner" for Afghan National Army headquarters.[224]

The new approach was confused and in public statements ISAF HQ stated that "Traditional mentoring, enabled by Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams, has in the past and will in the future assist the commanders in improving ANSF skills and knowledge."[225] The question that was not answered, and it was a critical one for TF Kandahar, was this: what was to be done with the OMLTs? Did they report to NATO Training Mission Afghanistan? Did they cease to exist? Nobody at TF Kandahar seemed to know where all this would lead. This complicated planning significantly.

BGen Ménard's response to the McChrystal Partnering Directive was that TF Kandahar was already doing it in Panjwayi District, where Afghan and Canadian platoons worked together and occupied the same tactical infrastructure. If a kandak and a battle group were co-located by platoons over an area like western Panjwayi, Ménard reasoned, there was no real need for the OMLT in the form it had been operating in since 2007. If the two units were not conducting company level operations, there was no need for a separate Canadian company-level mentor in addition to the Canadian company commander.[226]

That still did not sit well with the OMLT. Colonel Shane Brennan and his mentoring teams had been in action for several months and, with two months to go in their tour, the ability of the TF Kandahar commander to affect any dramatic change to OMLT operations was limited. At the same time Regional Command (South) under Carter explored how it wanted to interpret and implement partnering but that was taking time and the clock was running out. Brennan's men continued in their company mentoring tasks alongside the 1-205 Brigade kandaks throughout the province.[227]

How did partnering affect operations in the districts? Maj Lee Mossop, the Operations Officer of 1 PPCLI Battle Group and a veteran of the 2007 OMLT, described the difference:

> There had been operations with police, Afghan army, and Canadians together doing stuff, but it wasn't as integrated and formalized as this. This [was] a huge change. To the point where they said, "If you do not have any army or police participation in an operation, even if it's just a daily patrol — do not patrol. If the Afghan army, for whatever reason, in Sperwan said, "We're not patrolling today, we're taking the day off," we didn't send out patrols."[228]

1 PPCLI Battle Group and 2nd Kandak formed a joint command post at Ma'Sum Ghar, while the rifle companies did the same with their counterpart Afghan companies. The Afghan police were supposed to take the lead on searches from here on. What was not clear was where the Police OMLT fit in.

Photo Credit: Author

The debate over the efficacy of partnering in 2009 raised many questions. The most important were: to what extent were Afghan security forces being mentored, and to what extent were they merely the Afghan 'face' on coalition operations?

The Canadian mentor teams with the Afghan kandaks remained engaged in mentoring at the company-level for the time being and remained dispersed in Arghandab, Kandahar City, and Panjwayi districts with 1-205 Brigade kandaks. The incoming American forces as well as a possible expansion of the Afghan army in southern Afghanistan loomed over the existing organization and structures for the time being.

Dand District Operations, October–December 2009

The incoming Recce Squadron under the command of Maj Mark Popov conducted a relief in place Major J-F Cauden's troops in October. The incoming Dragoon squadron was structured identically with only two troops of eight Coyote vehicles and included a pair of Engineer LAVs and their combat engineer sections, a CIMIC detachment, a Bison ambulance and medics. Recce squadron also had a troop of Leopard tanks attached from Major Rob Hume's tank squadron for the first month of operations.[229]

The existing task, established during the previous rotation, involved manning two observation post positions in southern Dand at Gorgan and at Nakudak (see Figure 6-8). As we have seen, most of the development activity was conducted by other units while recce screened to the south and west. These were austere locations and amounted to another "Lost Command" environment like Spin Boldak or FOB Frontenac. NSE combat logistics patrols did not venture into this area and Recce Squadron was forced to use its small echelon to go back to Kandahar Air Field for resupply. Communications connectivity was spotty. The only unit that came anywhere near Recce Squadron was an American Route Clearance Package that rolled the roads from the Dand District Centre.[230]

Major Popov had little or no direction from higher headquarters on his initial tasks beyond "observe and report and don't get blown up." He also had little or no intelligence from the ASIC as to what the enemy was up to. Concern over the deleterious effects of being tied to two pieces of tactical infrastructure and lacking knowledge about what was going on in the communities south of Gorgan and north of the Reg Desert, Major Popov initiated an aggressive patrol schedule partnered with the Dand police in this area. CIMIC had a project in Teymurian but the team was incorporated into the patrols to assess the communities and their needs. What Recce Squadron found was surprising: the insurgents had a ratline moving west to east into Dand and Daman and were trying to outflank the Operation KALAY area. As a result, Recce Squadron conducted a series of random disrupt and foot patrols in these communities throughout October and November.[231]

Capt Mike McKillop's Recce Platoon from 1 PPCLI was attached to Popov's squadron after the tanks were withdrawn for a time and launched north from Gorgan into the Nakhonay area for a series of patrols. On one occasion McKillop's platoon was observed by the enemy early warning spotter chain. The tanks and Coyote at Gorgan acquired the insurgent spotters and engaged them from 1,500 meters away, to the enemy's surprise. When the insurgents attempted to reinforce, a pair of Griffons arrived on station and the enemy dispersed into the built-up area.[232]

Recce Squadron activities increasingly attracted enemy attention. The squadron took its first IED strike on 25 October 600 meters away from the Gorgan strong point. Recce night patrols pushed out to disrupt any enemy IED emplacers and to "rattle the cage". When the patrols were completed, the communities south of the river were assessed as increasingly hostile the further west they went, with Gorgan assessed as neutral. Angurian and Teymurian in the east were stable with strong village leadership.[233]

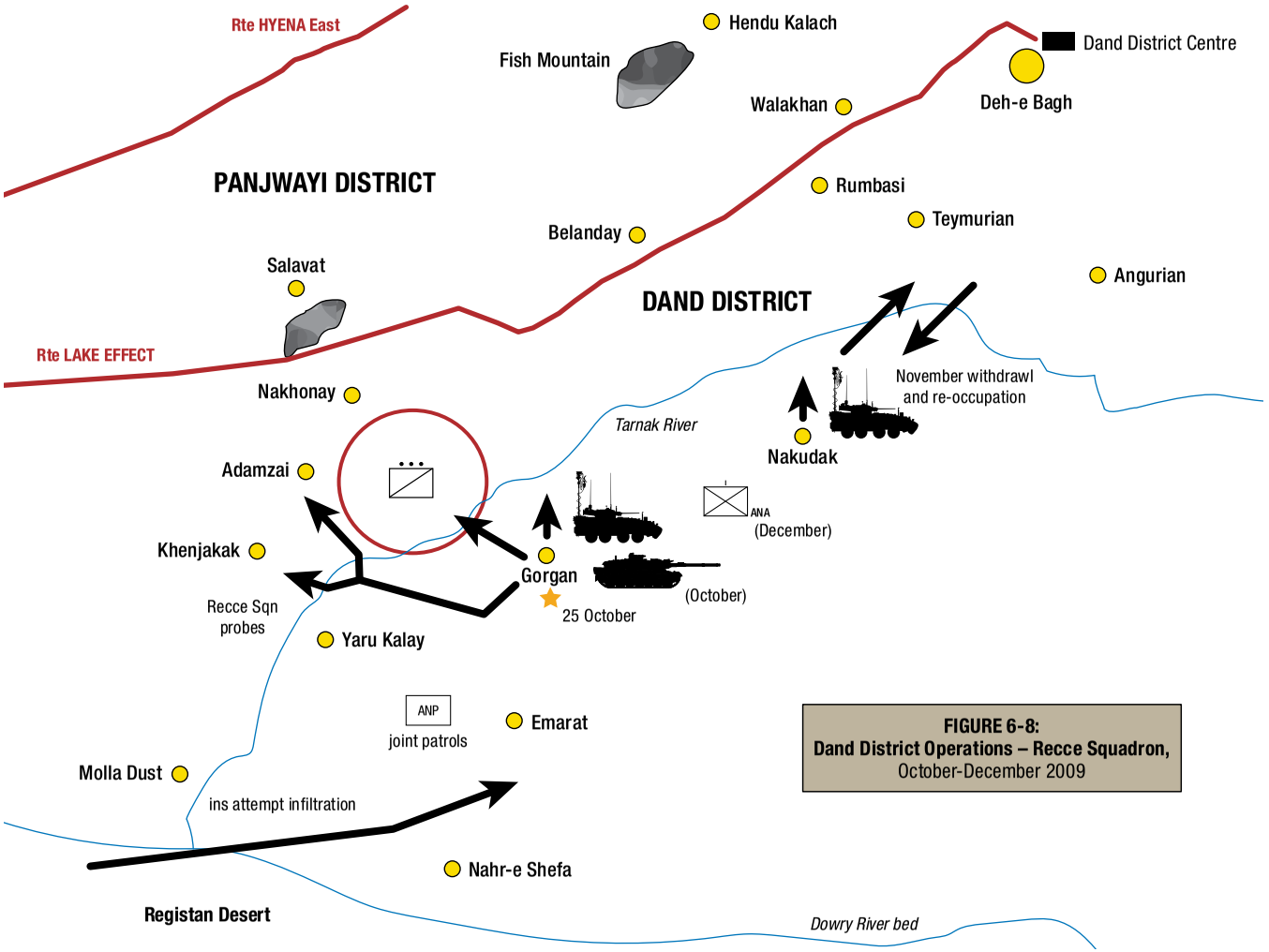

FIGURE 6-8:
Dand District Operations – Recce Squadron,
October-December 2009

Figure 6-8: Dand District Operations – Recce Squadron, October-December 2009

The November TF Kandahar relief in place altered Recce Squadron's dispositions and temporarily disrupted operations. Maj Popov was suddenly and without explanation ordered by LCol Walsh to abandon strong point Gorgan, redeploy to the strong point at Nakudak and then redeploy yet again to the Dand District Centre. After a precipitous pullout in which the contract ablutions truck was left behind, Recce Squadron was met by part of one of the PRT stabilization companies whose leaders breathlessly told Major Popov that they had instructions from TF Kandahar to "retake Gorgan" because it had, apparently, fallen to the enemy. At the same time the ablutions contractor wanted his truck back and made increasingly vocal complaints to the battle group.[234]

This disturbing disconnect in the command chain notwithstanding, Popov looked at the situation soberly. A UAV tracked the ablutions truck as it was stolen and driven into Nakhonay and a patrol was sent to recover it. The panic, as it turned out, was self-inflicted by TF Kandahar. District Leader Nazek inquired as to what was happening in his home town of Gorgan. This led to a flap between the battle group and the headquarters as to why Recce Squadron was being pulled out. Popov was ordered to re-occupy Gorgan.[235]

By this time, Maj Wayne Niven and D Company were operating in Nakhonay, and encountered enhanced insurgent activity. Facing north, Popov's recce troops screened Niven's activities from the two observation posts and were able to assist Niven in defining the enemy logistics chain coming in from Kenjakak and points west. Popov launched a series of probes from Gorgan into the Nakhonay-Kenjakak area which were essentially manoeuvre-to-collect tasks that also had disruptive effects. ISTAR resources attached to Recce Squadron were able to collect significant information and it significantly improved the ASIC's understanding of the problem in this particular seam. Similarly, the relationship between Recce Squadron and Major Lisa Elliott's ASIC team produced Operation FLASH LIGHT whereby Recce Squadron troops heading through Kandahar Air Field on leave were debriefed in detail on their experiences in Dand and Panjwayi districts. ASIC analysis concluded that Recce Squadron had a significant disruptive effect on enemy movement in the area both east into Daman and northeast into Nakhonay. The insurgents were forced to pause and reassess how they were going to tackle the Canadians and Afghans.[236]

The Ménard reoroganization led to Recce Squadron being designated the battle space commander for Dand District. All the Canadian elements operating in Dand were assigned to the Dand District Combat Team, whether they originally came from the PRT, Kandahar Air Field, or were already based in the district. These elements included a lightweight counter-mortar radar (LCMR) detachment, a forward observation officer-forward air controller (FOO/FAC) team, a platoon from C Company 1 PPCLI, and a National Support Element detachment.[237]

In addition, Popov was instructed to establish the Operations Coordination Center-District (Dand), which was essentially a re-named joint district coordination centre. He was given no resources to do so, so Recce Squadron Battle Captain, Enno Kerchkoff, became the OCC-D(D) operations officer. Recce Squadron now had to rapidly assimilate all security, governance, development, and information operations matters. And there were new tasks: keep Route Lake Effect open and establish a position at Walakan near the shrine, while at the same time continue to maintain the observation posts south of Nakhonay and keep the route connecting Gorgan to Nakudak and the district centre open. Fortunately an additional company of Afghan infantry was deployed to Dand to assist in their effort:

> When a partnered Afghan National Army unit started operating with us … and started patrolling a critical ville, they spooked the insurgents so badly and worked into the population so well that the insurgents panicked. A local insurgent ordered his fighters to try and stop the Afghan National Army. Shortly thereafter, two teams of [IED] emplacers went out one night and brazenly tried to dig [command wire] IEDs with range of out OPs. We killed them.[238]

Recce Squadron's relationship with the Dand police was excellent. One reserve soldier from the Queen's York Rangers was a Toronto police officer in civilian life and became the liaison with the Dand police. Later on a P-OMLT team arrived, and the CIMIC team was boosted to include a Construction Management Team from the Engineer Construction Squadron. Maj Popov decided to synchronize Recce Platoon plans and priorities to patrolling and other operations ordered by the District Chief of Police, Col Sher Shah, with Recce Squadron supporting the police and not the other way around. "I have the combat power, you have the police and knowledge," Popov explained. Recce Squadron did everything they could to ensure that Col Shah and District Leader Nazek remained in front and seen to be in the lead at all times. The P-OMLT and the OCC-D(D) functioned as liaison organizations, as Col Shah's men did not need much mentoring; they mostly needed equipment that they could not get from the overly bureaucratic Afghan National Police supply chain. With Recce Squadron and other ISTAR resources in support, Col Shah's police mounted raid after raid and patrol after patrol. This high tempo frustrated insurgent efforts to get anything going in Dand.[239]

Recce Squadron had no experience in information operations. Despite this Popov and his subordinates came up with four key messages: we were asked to be here by your district leader, Haji Nazek; we found a lot of bombs under and near the roads and we will find them and protect your children; the Afghan and Canadian security forces must search compounds and vehicles for your safety and ours; and we respect you.[240]

Photo Credit: Author

Working closely with District Leader Nazek, Maj Mark Popov and Recce Squadron consolidated Canadian-Afghan security efforts in Dand District and ensured that Afghan security forces took the lead on all operations.

All the stuff was pretty much out of my head — I'd received nothing formal on that side of things … The key messages, I made up and passed them higher. I got positive feedback from int, Info Ops/PSYOPS and the Ops O, no comment from the CO on them. To note, the Info Ops officer had nothing like that prepped or pushed from higher in terms of messaging, and nothing to give me when I asked. When he saw my points, he asked if he could use them.[241]

As for development,

It seemed to me that the stuff in that realm was very high-level, i.e.: Dahla Dam-type messaging, but I needed stuff relevant to the farmer in my district who could either be friendly, neutral, or put bombs under the road, so I needed tactical items for immediate use. The farmers in Dand did not give a crap about Dahla Dam.[242]

Dand flitted between Hold and Build during this time. Recce Squadron's most important activites during this time were to define the situation, especially in the southwestern part of the district, and to generate increased coordination at the Dand District Centre. Recce Squadron self-generated Operation SALADIN to make their moves more systematic. SALADIN was essentially a White Situational Awareness collection effort designed to assist Nazek and Shah by providing an ongoing, updatable data set based on regular patrols and key leader engagements. SALADIN identified, connected and assessed each community, then fed that data back to the district coordination centre, cued CIMIC and construction resources, and then re-engaged with local leaders to confirm that the activities were useful.[243] SALADIN's true impact would not be recognized until Recce Squadron was relieved by 1-71 Cavalry led by Lt Col John Paganini in spring 2010. TF 1-71 Cav was presented with a complete data set on what was occurring in the district, where, and by whom.[244]

The Situation in December 2009

The details of the substantial changes to TF Kandahar's relationships, plans and structure during the shift from Vance to Ménard almost completely eclipsed the fact that there were ongoing operations in the districts. For the most part, Canadian troops engaged in arduous and repetitive framework patrolling, conducted route sweeps with their Afghan army and police counterparts, worked with local communities on development projects, and mentored Afghan leaders. Developers continued to "push the rope" through their implementing partners. There was the odd IED attack that disabled vehicles and wounded personnel, but there were also plenty of IED finds. Occasionally American and Canadian helicopters were engaged by insurgents, usually to no effect. The operations tempo was low as the Afghan army and police forces worked with Regional Command (South) and TF Kandahar to realign, reorganize, and plan.

Zharey district, oddly enough, was comparatively quiet during this time. This was likely due to the effects of Operation DALBOR SHIELD as well as the reduction in the battalion area of operations which now excluded most of Zharey south of Highway 1 and west of Route SUMMIT. Another factor was a successful SOF operation that killed one of the main Taliban commanders in Zharey, who remained behind in the winter to keep local fighters motivated. His successor was also killed within days. The leadership vacuum led to serious discord among the local low-level insurgent commanders, who expressed their dissatisfaction by displaying insubordinate attitudes to higher-level commanders outside Afghanistan. The Zharey networks were assessed as thoroughly disrupted.[245]

Panjwayi district operations in December involved a series of movements by 1 PPCLI Battle Group and 2nd Kandak (see Figure 6-9). After Operation HYDRA, Canadian and Afghan companies cleared compounds west and northwest of Nakhonay, and continued to

secure Belanday and Haji Baba, where CIMIC operations predominated. A screen between Nakhonay and the Tarnak River remained in place. While the enemy was focused on these activites, 1 PPCLI and 2nd Kandak launched into Chalghowr instead of Nakhonay to define and then clear out a suspected logistics and transit node. Shuras were held and CIMIC was brought in to make contact with the local leadership. Occupation of Chalghowr had a notable effect on interdicting a ratline from Nakhonay to Salehan and then to Senjaray up in Zharey District.[246]

At the same time, the P-OMLT made some headway with the police, who were less and less impressed with the current chief of police and wanted to work with the Canadians. This resulted in a higher than normal patrol tempo in Bazaar-e Panjwayi itself. The only significant incident in that area was a rocket flung at the Central Asian Development Group implementing partner. Locals told the Canadians it was no big deal: somebody was unhappy with how CADG was conducting business and this was how they were expressing that dissatisfaction. Towards the end of December, LCol Walsh and his 2nd Kandak counterpart, Colonel Baris, mounted a combined operation into the Sperwan Ghar area. Operation AZH DAHAR swept through the area with little contact but great fanfare.[247]

Nakhonay and environs, however, remained extremely problematic. Lt Andrew Nuttall, leading 12 Platoon from D Company, was killed by an IED on 23 December. ISTAR reportage suggested that the community of Khenjakak contained a possible IED production facility. LCol Walsh decided to launch Operation TOFFAN to deal with the problem. The next day, the tank squadron conducted a feint in the Mohajerin area, while A Company established a presence in the Folad area, ostensibly as part of an operation directed at Chowlghar. With D Company and a company from 2nd Kandak holding in Nakhonay, Recce Squadron established an OP and a screen along the Dowry River. After the pattern of life was established over several days, Canadian CH-47s escorted by CH-146 Griffons air assaulted C Company into landing zones northwest and southwest of Khenjakak. Sweeping through the community they uncovered three separate stashes of IED equipment. There was no contact and C Company was extracted by helicopter.[248]

The only reported security issue in Dand throughout December related to the Fatay Khan Security Company, not the insurgency. This organization extorted money from contractors while dressed as police and driving police vehicles. When Canadian police mentors investigated the situation, they learned that the security company was owned by district leader Nazek's brother, Fatay Khan. The sensitivities of this issue led to further analysis and forestalled any action for the time being. The CIMIC team working with PRT elements was, significantly, able to convince Nazek to hold a District Development Assembly shura. Though not well attended, it was a start. Connectivity had to be established between the now-identified Community Development Councils and the district government.

Figure 6-9: Panjwayi District Operations, December 2009

An American implementing partner, Agriteam, expressed interest in projects and programs in the district, while Canadian engineers from the Construction Management Organization reported that they had 920 people employed on local development projects in the communities.[249]

An important new program was launched in Dand District during December. This was the "Sons of Nakhonay" program, more formally known as the Culturally Structured Youth Employment Program. The idea was to create a 'youth corps' like Katimavik in Canada to do socially valuable work in the communities but with a vetted staff issued with a uniform and identification card.[250]

Capt Whit Tyerman was a driving force behind the Sons of Nakhonay.

> Two elements drove me to drafting the Sons of Nakhonay. We were, it seemed, always engaged in planning the next big battle group-level operation. These large operations netted few tangible results as any opposition would fade into the background at the overwhelming presence. Our persistent presence in the villages was a very different game. I had had the opportunity to work with several of our small, key, forward locations in helping set up their sustainment and support. This was where real lasting impact could take place. Secondly, I vividly remember in an O-group, the BG commander describing his latest Shura IVO Nakhonay, as Shuras were always conducted, with the elders of the village. His frustration at the situation was evident. The elders wanted to work with us, they wanted us there. When confronted with the "Well, why do the IEDs keep getting placed?", a generational divide became apparent. The elders stated that, while they were on side, it was their sons, their sons who the Taliban had influence over. How did they have influence? I assumed money for placement of IEDs, a sense of [fighting for] the community, a sense that their actions had impact. So how could we undercut that? I kept asking myself … how do we target the sons? I stayed up that whole night, and put together the proposal on my PowerPoint slide deck — half of my effort spent on describing the elements and synergy of the program goals, and half of my effort spent thinking about how I could sell it, gain backing and approval quickly. We wanted effects on the ground, not a lot of talk. Being an Electrical and Mechanical Engineers officer, the only street cred I had with the Patricia's was that I had completed a previous tour in Iraq, with the Desert Rats, while on exchange with the British Army. So I couched the presentation, drawing parallels with a similarly named program Americans had employed when assigned to control parts of cities in Iraq. They too had given ID cards to the FAMs [fighting-age males] as a part of the employment program — and suddenly the trouble-makers were not only identifiable, but working for them. Time spent together fosters understanding. So the battle group embraced the idea, Maj Darcy Wright pushed and got it funded, and then the magic really happened

> with our guys in the villages — who deserve all of the credit for any successes that the program had. Belanday was an early adopter. Nakhonay was considered "not quite ready", so (as I recall) it was implemented in three towns surrounding Nakhonay. It helped provide a bit more structure and direction to our CIMIC efforts, and increased the level of engagement. Once village priority projects were getting worked on by the youth (and some elders) of each town, the success stories started being reported back. The final stage was really a hand-over of the program to the Americans, as we handed over most of that region, town by town. I believe that they built on our success and had the bucks to really expand. One other outlier part of the story — at one point a reporter got a hold of the name "Sons of Nakhonay" and thought we might have been funding youth militias in the towns. So a new acronym was officially used … but everyone kept referring to it by the original name.[251]

There was a lot of frenetic activity in Kandahar City throughout December. The new Regional Command (South) led by Maj Gen Nick Carter and the imminent Regional Platform (South) led by Frank Ruggerio asserted themselves in Afghan security force circles in the wake of the new partnering directives. These moves involved the PRT in various ways, though Canada was a diminished partner in this effort.

Canada was able to retain some salience by the reassignment of DFAIT diplomat Neil Clegg, who had been the Political Advisor to the Stryker Brigade before it was re-tasked. The highly-experienced Clegg, a former Canadian Forces officer, became a special advisor to Governer Wesa. Wesa was in turn less than enthralled with the work of the international community development organizations in Kandahar, especially those implementing partners used by the Western national aid agencies:

> At a press conference held on 19 December to highlight the accomplishments of the provincial government in the past year, he stated that the International Community was in part responsible for the level of corruption as it gave no role to the [government] in contracting processes. He highlighted three main challenges faced by his Office: 1) implementation of useless workshops by the international community; 2) funding agencies implementing their own plans instead of considering the needs of Afghans; and, 3) lack of coordination among the Government and NGOs.[252]

There were also new Canadian-dominated organizations, like the Kandahar City Effects Team and, eventually, the All Source Intelligence Centre (Forward). The OCC-P at the palace was enhanced with increased Afghan security force presence and better connectivity.

On the policing front, the entire coalition police support effort was about to be reorganized by all of the entities engaged in it, something that had been called for years ago.

With the influx of American organizations and thus greater attention paid to the problem by Kabul, these moves could finally take place. American units were re-organized for partnering and called Security Force Advisory Teams (SFATs) which were more like P-OMLT's than their old Police Mentoring Teams.

Not surprisingly, questionable elements in the Kandahar City police were extremely concerned about these changes. The more scrutiny placed on the existing structure, the more rot was uncovered. For example, the commander of Police Sub-Station 11 had his business interests identified and was told to stop. He would be compensated, but his profiteering days were over. He was assessed as likely to "create chaos in order to promote his own interests and personal revenues." As a result, he was removed.[253] Police cross-over with the insurgency was also identified and targeted. At one point, however, the hunters became the hunted and one anti-corruption officer was attacked and killed, as was a checkpoint commander. Bent police were involved in one of the killings, but the motives behind them were opaque to Canadian analysts.[254] Indeed, the OCC-P provided targeting data on a Taliban cell leader to the police who subsequently prepared to raid the compound where he was lurking. While the raid was about to go in, the OCC-P received a phone call and were told that the compound belonged to former Chief of Police Mirwais, who was the younger brother of Member of Parliament Mohommad Arif Noorzai, and, incidentally, leader of the Noorzai tribe. The raid was called off.[255]

The new perspective on corruption also expressed itself at Sarposa Prison. After an inmate hunger strike in November, Canadians working there received information that convinced them that something was amiss in the prison leadership. Four staff members were believed to be taking bribes and assisting inmates of the National Security Wing.[256] More scrutiny was applied and enough information was developed that indicated that there was support for the insurgency from within the prison. These revelations allowed the PRT to approach Kabul and insist that the warden be fired.[257] The new prison governor, General Ghulam Dastageer Mayar, found all kinds of communications equipment in the National Security Wing, identified 14 inmates who were, in fact, insurgent commanders of various ranks and recommended their immediate removal to Pol-e Charkhi Prison in Kabul.[258] In effect, Sarposa Prison had been a command-and-control node of the insurgency in Kandahar Province.

It was unfortunate that December ended, as it had the previous year, with a catastrophic IED strike. On 30 December, road construction on the border between Kandahar City and Dand District forced a PRT patrol to take a detour. Three days earlier, an NSE combat logistics patrol on the same road had triggered an IED in the same place. That one turned out to be a dud; this one was not. The explosion completely destroyed the LAV RWS and killed five people: Sgt Kirk Taylor of the 84th Independent Field Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery;

Sgt George Miok of 41 Combat Engineer Regiment; Cpl Zachery McCormack of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment; Pte Garrett Chidley of the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry; and journalist Michelle Lang of the *Calgary Herald*. Four other soldiers and DFAIT representative Bushra Saeed were severely wounded.

In addition to the dead and wounded, there were other disturbing aspects of the attack. The attack was sophisticated in its IED methodology, something not previously seen in Dand. A vehicle with an individual filming the aftermath was also observed. That vehicle was tracked by UAV, which led to what appeared to be an insurgent cell meeting for a post-attack wash up. Afterwards, the people in the meeting deposited an item with a confederate at a police checkpoint. The meeting location was later determined to be a compound belonging to Gul Agha Sherzai, leader of the Barakzai tribe and former governor of Kandahar.[259]

On 24 January part of the cell that conducted the December attack was located by ISTAR means and fortuitously spotted in Dand by a pair of CH-146 Griffons and a CH-147 Chinook, which were in the process of transporting a VIP to visit Sarposa prison. One of the Griffons was equipped with an MX-15 camera system and spotted the target from over 10 kilometers away. An MQ-9 Reaper was vectored to confirm the target but as it turned out the UAV had no weapons aboard. A Griffon Weapons Team was scrambled from Kandahar Air Field while the base was under rocket attack (an attack that wounded eight Romanians). The Griffons acquired the target, were cleared to engage, and took out two IED emplacers with their Dillon Gatling guns.[260]

Back into Arghandab?

When the Stryker Brigade area of operations in Arghandab District was realigned, LTC Frank Jenio and the 2nd Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment (2-508 Infantry, or Task Force 2 Fury) moved to an area of operations that stretched from the Arghandab District Centre northwest to Jelawur, southwest to a point near Highway 1, south to the bridge over the Arghandab River and then northeast to the District Centre. 1-12 Infantry remained responsible for Senjaray, while the 97th MP Battalion's area of operations lay to the east along Highway 1. 1-205 Brigade's 3rd Kandak was retained in Arghandab to partner with TF 2 Fury.

The command relationship between the American and Canadian units was, however, convoluted. TF 2 Fury was structured to mentor Afghan security forces under an American command structure but now found themselves operating as a regular light infantry battalion working alongside Afghan troops and their Canadian mentors. Like 2-2 Infantry, TF 2 Fury did not come with all of the brigade-level enablers that were usually provided by a higher headquarters. TF 2 Fury also lacked connectivity with the provincial-level governance and

development structures and programs. As a result, TF 2 Fury was temporarily handed off to Task Force Kandahar in December 2009 until a larger reorganization could take place in August 2010. During that time there were a variety of other command issues relating to its higher American headquarters. In January 2010, just after TF 2 Fury settled into its new job, LTC Jenio was suddenly relieved of command by his American superiors and LTC Guy Jones replaced him. On 19 January, A Company commander, Captain Paul Pena, was killed by an IED.[261] The combined effects of these factors produced some command turbulence throughout January.

For the most part, TF Kandahar had not tracked events in Arghandab in detail since handing the district off to 1-17 Infantry in August. A lot had changed. A former Mujaheddin turned Taliban, Haji Abdul Jabbar, defected to the Government and was installed as District Leader. Karimullah, Naquib's son, remained the Alikozai tribal leader but was believed by many to be weak. Jabbar had influence in a couple of "ink spots" in the vicinity of the district centre, while Karimullah had influence in the areas along the east bank of the Arghandab. Neither dominated the west bank communities. Canadian analysis was that there was no unity in the district and each village was on its own. The district shura was made up of Alikozais with no representatives from other tribes.[262]

Despite its internal troubles and the divided social scene, TF 2 Fury was assessed as having stabilized the situation by early January. Success was based on low-level foot patrols and through re-connecting with local community leaders. A company-level operation conducted by 2nd Kandak with a company from TF 2 Fury demonstrated to the local population that the two entities could effectively operate together. The growing confidence in the area led to the deployment of a Government of Afghanistan agricultural department team and the convening of a development shura in western Arghandab led by the District Support Team, which consisted of USAID and State Department mentors.[263]

After the development shura, coalition forces mounted Operation FAZILAT, an operation designed to clear the community of Jeleran which had a reputation as an insurgent bed-down area. This time a Canadian Stabilization Platoon and a P-OMLT working with Afghan Uniformed Police participated alongside 3rd Kandak elements and TF 2 Fury. The P-OMLT and the police handled the compound searches and the community was cleared without incident. The CIMIC team was told by locals that "the government doesn't work any more" and that the population welcomed any form of development it could get.[264]

With the Canadian CIMIC and P-OMLT back in play in Arghandab, TF Kandahar regained situational awareness. District Leader Jadbar was deemed competent and, interestingly, was sympatico with CIMIC's desire to provide recarpeting for the district mosques. Jabbar told them that "it was a good idea and that mosques in the villages that

were on the fence should be targeted rather than strictly those who are CF friendly." For the most part, USAID and its implementing partners handled development aspects in Arghandab. Their State Department mentor worked hard to enhance the role of the new shura leader, Haji Mohommad, but there was friction between him and Jabbar. Jabbar believed that Mohommad was corrupt and wanted him removed.[265]

On the policing front, the P-OMLT connected quickly and easily with the district chief of police and his detachments. P-OMLT also delivered some basic counter-IED training to the police. The Afghan police were annoyed as, once again, they had not been paid for several months and threatened to depart. P-OMLT mentors worked with the provincial police headquarters to sort this out. At the same time, there were concerns that TF 2 Fury was 'poaching' police in Panjwayi by offering them a variety of incentives. When the complaint was investigated, it appeared as though disgruntled cops in Panjwayi were playing the Americans and Canadians off against each other, a phenomenon that infected the power structure in Panjwayi in 2011.[266]

A particularly positive development was the resumption of cellular telephone service in the district, and the distribution of cards (facilitated by Canadian and American efforts) with the OCC-D emergency service number to encourage people to call in.[267]

The activities of TF 2 Fury and their attached Canadians attracted higher-level attention to Arghandab District. Brig Gen Basir of 1-205 Brigade held a security shura with the Afghan stakeholders still standing in the district after the fall's operations, leading to closer operational ties between 3rd Kandak (and their Canadian mentors) and TF 2 Fury. Unfortunately, 1-205 Brigade's involvement in Operation MOSHTARAK in Helmand Province weakened MESMAR, a Clear and Hold operation by Afghan, Canadian and American forces in Kandahar Province scheduled for February.[268]

Canadian CIMIC worked with the District Support Team to determine the new power structure's parameters. Brig Gen Basir warned those involved that "tribal leaders and criminals in Arghandab were using ISAF forces as pawns in their internal conflicts." And CIMIC uncovered major problems with the shura leader Haji Mohommad. Mohommad was in fact using his influence to pass contracts to a construction company that was on the PRT blacklist. Jabbar was also blamed for corrupt dealings and it looked like the district leadership was once again in disarray. That said the Specialist Engineer Team worked to survey routes so that bridges that suffered damage from IED use could be remediated while an American Civil Affairs team examined culvert removal and irrigation diversion.[269]

By the end of February, a number of large caches were discovered using locally-provided information and IED finds directed by local people were up. SOF was active in taking out leadership targets during this time and eventually TF 2 Fury reported that captured insurgents in the district were now averaging between 16 and 19 years old.

These inexperienced fighters did not possess the same skill level as their predecessors resulting in numerous failed IED detonation attempts. These neophyte insurgents could "spray and pray" against tactical infrastructure, but until more experienced fighters were re-introduced into Arghandab, the Afghan, Canadian, and American forces were taking back the initiative.[270]

Panjwayi District Operations, January–February 2010

The situation in Panjwayi district in the first two months of 2010 broke down geographically into four distinct but interconnected areas: Sperwan Ghar, Bazaar-e Panjwayi, central-east Panjwayi (between Mohajerin and Zalakhan), and Nakhonay. C Company 1 PPCLI and an Afghan company from 2nd Kandak handled Sperwan Ghar. Bazaar-e Panjwayi had a company from 2nd Kandak, the Afghan police, Stab B CIMIC, and part of A Company 1 PPCLI. Central-eastern Panjwayi had part of 2nd Kandak and part of A Company 1 PPCLI, while D Company and an Afghan company were responsible for Nakhonay and environs. (see Figure 6-10).

For the most part, C Company kept up the pressure in Sperwan through patrols and shuras. This led to the elders from Pay-e Moluk to approach the Canadians and Afghans for more assistance in their community. This request, combined with an IED attack against C Company on Route Brown, led to Operation OTASH on 6 January. The target communities were Pay-e Moluk and Nal Bazaar, with the aim of cleaning out any IED facilities and generating goodwill in both communities. The idea was to insert recce platoon plus snipers west of the communities, secure Observation Post KYBER and the BROWN-HYENA junction with a troop of Leopards and a LAV III platoon, then sweep the two communities with the Afghan infantry company supported by a platoon from C Company and engineers.[271]

The snipers and Recce Platoon came under fire from the enemy's screen on the 28 Easting. The Canadians returned fire, killing their antagonists who were uncharacteristically left by their compatriots to rot in the sun. The sweep teams found bags and bags of ammonium nitrate and artillery shells. With Lt Col Baris in the lead, shuras yielded that the locals were disenchanted with the IEDs, their children were getting killed, and the Taliban would not let them farm to the west. They also wanted a school. The enemy continued to probe the recce screen, which resulted in more sniper engagements, and even tried to probe OP KYBER: this resulted in the insurgents getting shredded by 25mm fire. An orbiting UAV later spotted enemy personnel with wheelbarrows evacuating body parts. Maj Rutland understood with some regret that the coalition forces were not positioned to stay in the two communities in order to provide development assistance and that the enemy would

Figure 6-10: Panjwayi District Operations, January-February 2010

continue to get into Nal Bazaar and Pay-e Moluk. The Zangabad-based Taliban were too numerous and agile and could only be kept at bay until an operation was mounted to clean out the Horn of Panjwayi — again.[272]

Consequently, the decision was made in higher headquarters to deploy TF Trident west of the 28 Easting to disrupt and shape for a possible thrust into the Horn of Panjwayi later in 2010. TF Trident was a compact and agile organization based around US Navy SEALs that came with its own Chinook helicopters and other integral support. TF Trident put a liaison officer in with the battle group and mounted numerous operations. Maj Lee Mossop, the battle group's Operations Officer, noted:

> We worked with TF Trident quite a bit, about a dozen times. Way, way, way more than CANSOFCOM, the CSOR guys. And we never did anything with [JTF-2] because it was complicated, whereas TF Trident was uncomplicated.[273]

The SEALs hit leadership targets and conducted influence operations in Zangabad and communities to the west. One of these operations bagged Nabi, the leader of the network operating in Bazaar-e Panjwayi. He was taken out at an insurgent meeting near Zangabad. These actions relieved some of the pressure in that community, while increased patrolling of Haji Haibibollah to the south played a role as well.[274]

The struggle over development and governance continued in the meeting rooms of the new District Centre in Bazaar-e Panjwayi. The four dominant issues, unchanged over several rotations, were schools, roads, police and governance, and the Canadians' most important problem was how District Governor Haji Baran interacted with all four.[275]

By early 2010, a Kabul-driven impetus to get moving on education reached the districts. In many villages, but especially in Mohajerin, Pay-e Moluk and Sperwan, residents began asking passing Canadians about schools, so both Canadian and Afghan patrols began testing the interest level with questions about whether people thought schools were good for their communities. At the same time, CIMIC operators started to assess the state of education in the district to gain a baseline.[276]

District Governor Haji Baran was initially lukewarm and later on he told the CIMIC team that there was not enough security for schools and wanted to focus resources on other matters. The fact that Baran was illiterate was likely in play here, but he was correct in that there needed to be permanent security presence in communities first so that schools and those running them would not be attacked by the insurgents. Distressingly the formerly active school in Bazaar-e Panjwayi itself had been stripped for some reason back in August. Baran was confused. On investigation it turned out that the school was closed because insurgent commander Nabi ordered it so, but Baran insisted to the Canadians that it was open and

operating. Who was really running Bazaar-e Panjwayi? When Major Niven and D Company asked around Nakhonay, they learned that the population also wanted a school, but Baran said one was not needed there.[277] The matter came to a head when Governor Wesa intervened and set up an education shura in Kandahar City. The Canadian assessment was that "Although very adept at giving speeches and telling local nationals what to do, Haji Baran clearly does not listen to their needs and does not take action for the benefit of the people of Panjwayi."[278] Worse, Baran actually considered that the schools should teach a curriculum that was acceptable to the Taliban so the insurgents would leave them alone.[279] When the Bazaar-e Panjwayi school reopened at the end of February, the headmaster told an ANA patrol that, although the enemy had ordered the school closed, the parents and teachers "decided to keep the school open regardless of threats." The elders "had told the Taliban leadership that it is acceptable for the Taliban to fight ISAF, Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police, but not [to] threaten their children's education."[280]

Baran continued to interfere with road construction throughout the district. In one case he assaulted workers on Route Hyena and then had his people destroy the project under construction. He was absolutely livid about the UNOPS/SAITA road project on Route Lake Effect and it took everything the Canadian development people had to assuage his anger. There was further push back by Baran against the NISAY construction company who was in the process of fixing culverts near Sperwan.[281] CIMIC investigation suggested that the issue was pure, outright tribal patronage but that the effects were substantial:

> [CIMIC] met with a labourer who said they were frustrated because those persons who are not Alikozai or Noorzai had difficulty acquiring employment in Bazaar-e Panjwayi. [He] echoed comments made during the 11 Jan patrols that suggested both Haji Mahmood (village leader of Bazaar-e Panjwayi) and Haji Baran (district leader Panjwayi) prevented the firing of Kakars and others during the Sperwan road project in 2008/09 and for more recent projects in the area … in his opinion, the lack of decent employment was doing more to drive people to work for the Taliban than religious views. He said people were desperate for work and frustrated that employment opportunities were denied to them because of their tribe … within [Kandahar City] he did not feel that there were tribal tensions with his neighbours except when employment or contracts were given by the government.[282]

Baran wanted control of every project in the district so he could benefit both financially and from patronage but saw CIMIC and other developers working directly with locals as competition. It was increasingly clear to everyone but Baran that he did not have the intellectual scope to adjust to the new ways that Governor Wesa and his supporters were implementing in the province. Yet Wesa would not remove Baran. Baran was connected to the intricate Kandahar power broker network and there were implications if he were removed.

The Canadian assessment was that Wesa was seen as weak and, now that the Naquib-led Alikozais were neutralized, Ahmad Wali Karzai and the Sherzai-led Barakzais were ascendant. Baran was, from his perspective, besieged by the other power brokers in Panjwayi: Haji Agha Lalai Dastagiri, Haji "Dollars" Agha Lalai, and Haji Mahmood (who constantly tried to stir up trouble between CIMIC, the P-OMLT and Baran). All were connected to Ahmad Wali Karzai, even though they were either Alikozais or Noorzais. Baran, being a Noorzai, was also from a minority tribe which contributed to his political isolation and insecurity.[283] Baran, however, was influenced by Ahmad Wali Karzai. Neither Karzai nor Wesa moved to replace Baran and neither dissuaded the other power brokers who were aligned with them to back off. In this sense, governance in Panjwayi remained Mafia-like in that all of the competing power brokers were from the same mob and were fighting over the same piece of action, with the bosses deriving enjoyment from observing the competition play out in the Panjwayi arena.

Of course, keeping the police weak and at bay was a useful tool in such an environment, and Canadian police mentor restructuring did not help matters. There was no functional district chief of police at this time, and only fifty out of a required 312 personnel reported for duty regularly. The dysfunctional chief of police regularly cancelled P-OMLT classes. Yet at the same time, those fifty police officers performed well in spite of poor leadership and low numbers. The chief of police was relieved of duty at the end of January. There was now better P-OMLT coverage and, as a result, more presence patrols and mentoring took place which in turn improved security in Bazaar-e Panjwayi proper. There were simply not enough police, and not enough equipment for the police that were present and accounted for throughout the district. There were a lot of promises from Kandahar City but no action.[284] The inability of TF Kandahar to leverage police resources out of the provincial government for Canadian operating areas produced an extremely problematic situation in Panjwayi.

By the end of January, the lack of a coordinated approach to district level governance and development was finally addressed with the deployment of the District Support Team (DST). The DST had representatives from the US State Department and USAID, plus a Canadian from Foreign Affairs. The DST worked with the Operational Coordination Centre-District (Panjwayi) and the newly-formed Office of the District Governor. The Canadian military components included a stabilization platoon, an engineer construction team, a detachment from the Specialist Engineer Team to handle contracting, intelligence, and PSYOPS.[285]

The District Support Team's task was to mentor governance and fund development. It did not belong to the PRT, even though it resembled the "PRT forward" as envisaged by Canadian planners back in 2007-2008. For the most part the DST had a relationship

to Regional Command (South) and those who controlled American funding at the PRT. Ideally, the DST wanted to have eight Afghan members in the district office who could access development money from the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development who in turn could connect to their counterparts at the provincial level, and thus cut out the PRT entirely.[286]

Ron Melvin, the State Department representative and *de facto* leader of the DST, recognized early on that grievances had to be addressed and the cell phones turned back on. The draft District Stabilization Plan had to be populated. He also moved to beef up the withered organizations like the District Development Assembly in order to procedurally enmesh Haji Baran and move him away from unilateral activity as much as possible.[287]

The action in the central part of the district consisted mainly of local patrols and shuras conducted by Maj Ryan Jurkowski's A Company and its associated Afghan company from 2nd Kandak in the Mohajerin-Salavat-Fatollah-Chawlgor quadrangle. For the most part enemy activity was limited to intimidation operations consisting of anti-government mullah blathering from one mosque and an insurgent team from Nakhonay that destroyed cell phones and put up night letters. An IED team was sporadically active but information from local children resulted in their discovery before detonation. These communities were, for the most part, primed for development so CIMIC and Construction Management Organization teams worked with local communities to develop project lists and get them under way.[288]

The main problem for the battle group, and especially for Maj Wayne Niven and D Company, remained Nakhonay. Patrolling demonstrated that the population was split; east Nakhonay was pro-government, while the west side was anti-. The insurgents banned cellphones and issued usage "permits", claiming that their objective was to stop locals from accidentally triggering IEDs on Route Lake Effect.[289] Reports flowed in about masked, armed Taliban with loudspeakers who were "active in the villages" east of Nakhonay with support from Nakhonay itself.[290]

D Company 1 PPCLI and 3rd Company 2nd Kandak continued with their patrol program but made no contact with the enemy until 14 January when a dismounted patrol led by Sgt John Wayne Fraught triggered a direct-fire fragmentation-charge IED hidden in a wall. Sgt Fraught was killed, but the triggerman was captured.[291] By coincidence, Maj Niven observed the event from a SUAV feed:

> I was pissed off more than anything. Because we're doing good things here, we got a presence here, we're starting to have an effect but they're still taking bites out of us and I'm pissed off. We're not having any gunfights at this point … And we're having marginal success in getting stuff started. We just see a puff of smoke and fuck, John Wayne gets killed.[292]

The Fraught killing was catalytic:

> I sat down with [LCol] Jerry Walsh and I'm like, "Okay sir, what we're doing, the nice-guy stuff, is not working. We need to change the dynamic. I need to be the asshole for a while. And I need you and the Brigade Commander to give me the assets to be an asshole." And he said, "What do you want?" "I want more permanent presence in the town, I want air overhead all the time, aviation or fast. I want illumination missions at night over the village. I want rock'n'roll 24/7 and omni-presence. 'Cause I want their attention. I'm sick and tired of doing this. Because I got three dead soldiers now, and other than small results in here, I don't have enough to put in my mind to justify the risks we're taking." They gave me everything.[293]

D Company got its own counter-IED team and put together a quick-reaction force so it would not be dependent on the tank QRF from distant Ma'Sum Ghar, something that would amount to "a deliberate operation down [Route] Lake Effect." The counter-IED teams found three devices per day: pressure plates, fragmentation charges, homemade explosives, and caches of components. OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters were "overhead, every day, all day long. I remember going on patrol one day and there's a B-1 bomber overhead, buzzing the town. My JTAC, Bill Hunt, said 'Sir, I never thought I'd see the day when we would do this.' And I said, 'Yeah. Bill, when I was a young guy, that was a strategic nuclear bomber. And now it's working in support of the company.'"[294] C Battery kept up the illumination and "it got the attention of the local elders." "What's going on? What's going on?" I said, 'Hey guys: you start telling me what's going on in this village and who's doing what to whom.' I put 12 Platoon in there." Recce Squadron kept an eye on the southeastern approaches.

The "stick" was followed with a "carrot" from Stab B. What did Nakhonay's leadership want? Malim wanted roads. He was told no security, no roads. Attempts to get more police in were unsuccessful. When the battle group asked Haji Baran to engage the elders, he reported that the local people suggested establishing a position southwest of town to stop bad people coming in from Khenjakak.[295] Baran was brought in again to engage the Nakhonay elders, but this time he ran up against Haji Malim:

> [Baran] stated that, if the people of Nakhonay do not help ISAF and ANSF, then ISAF and ANSF will build a checkpoint in the centre of Nakhonay. [Haji Malim] said that ISAF has been working in Dand for some time, yet has done very little. Specifically, Malim pointed out that there are 30 villages in Dand without schools, and that ISAF has been paying 400 Afghanis per day for two years to build a road but nothing had been built [referring to the Fosters-Hyena paving project]. Baran later stated that Malim was Taliban and has a son who is an insurgent

> commander. Throughout the shura, Malim spoke first and all the other elders generally looked to him before speaking … Baran later said that, if [Malim] did not cooperate by the end of the next shura, then he would have them all arrested and detained by the police.[296]

ISTAR resources and local patrolling produced the theory that Malim's son was a Taliban leader connected with the other insurgent networks in Kandahar Province, but it remained unclear whether Malim was Taliban or not. Some thought Malim was an insurgent supporter using his son as his conduit, or it may have been the other way around. Further information determined that Malim had two sons, and all three were communicating with Taliban commanders in Dand and in Panjwayi.[297]

Meanwhile, LCol Walsh and Lt Col Bahris prepared the battle group and Kandak 2 for Operation SHER PAKA-WAL. The usual recce and UAV screens went in around the town on 1 February and Haji Baran arrived for a shura with Malim and his colleagues the next day. This shura produced abject denials that they were insurgents and assertions that the insurgents were all out-of-area fighters. Malim gave in incrementally. He agreed to a presence in the town and pledged increased cooperation.[298] Twenty four hours later, D Company with 3rd Company in the lead, cleared through Nahkonay to a point on the southern limit of the community, Objective BALLPEEN, and engineers arrived to build a patrol base. D Company and 3rd Company re-aligned so that there were three combat outposts arrayed right through the heart of the community: Shkarre in Haji Baba, and Patricia and BALLPEEN in Nahkonay. Six IED caches were discovered during the course of Operation SHER PAKA-WAL. As it turned out, however, a number of Taliban commanders who were in Nakhonay received advance warning of the operation through Malim, who had agents in the government feeding him information. These commanders escaped to Kenjakak where they joined another commander and 20 of his men.[299]

Malim was not fazed by the action and had excuses prepared when Stab B CIMIC patrols asked him for answers. The caches were old. The caches belonged to someone else. Nobody could talk or they would be subject to Taliban reprisals.[300] As it turned out, Malim influenced events in neighbouring Haji Baba. According to ISTAR reportage, he completely intimidated the Haji Baba leadership and 'allowed' development to take place there if there were corresponding benefits to Nahkonay. This behaviour undermined development efforts by Construction Management Organization in the surrounding area. Malim also sent his sub-elders to Haji Baran to convince him that local Nakhonians gave up IED caches to D Company and turned in Taliban so that projects could get started in the community.[301] That information could not be correlated with the facts as D Company understood them.

Problems with Malim continued throughout February, and it was clear to Major Niven that he was playing games. The Haji Baba leaders were subjected to various forms of intimidation because of their acceptance of CIMIC projects. D Company and CIMIC determined that these and other measures "were probably put out to discredit and provide confusion amongst local nationals. This would fit the situation in Haji Baba/Nakhonay as the malik of Nakhonay has consistently been disruptive against projects… Haji Malim will back a project then withdraw his support at the last minute….[Malim is trying] to discredit CIMIC and cause potential labourers to refuse to work on projects."[302]

As Malim stalled for time, the Quetta Shura reorganized the insurgent effort in eastern Panjwayi. The experienced and respected commander, Haji Amir, was brought in to organize the Nakhonay-Salavat-Chalghowr cells into a unified entity to fight the Canadians and the Afghans. He had personal connections to the area and was instructed to exploit them.[303]

The situation was not much better at the district level. The District Support Team was instrumental at getting the defunct District Development Assembly to meet for the first time in two years. However, the membership "felt that the government was not responsive" and they collectively expressed a lack of confidence in Haji Baran. The assembly members conveyed to the support team that they were, in fact, afraid of Baran, but liked the fact that the DST was taking an interest and agreed to work with the new members.[304]

Kandahar City Operations, January–February 2010

By early 2010 the enemy command structure in Kandahar City was believed to consist of the infamous Jabar Agha, who was the central Taliban commander for Kandahar province; Hafiz Majid, who was the senior commander in Kandahar City; and two subordinate commanders, Mullah Qasim and Spin Talib. The forces controlled by Haji Amir, the enemy commander in Dand, and Mullah Zergay, his counterpart in Arghandab, played a supporting role. The confluence of insurgents and elements in the government were better defined by this point after intense ISTAR operations. Arif Khan Noorzai, influential in the Malajat area and rural areas in northern Dand, and whose brother Mirwais was a player in Kandahar police politics, had connections to Hafiz Majid. One could infer that those connections were not entirely benign given the high level of violence directed against the police in the western city districts.[305]

A major Canadian ally was Mayor Gulam Haidar Hamedi, who was the closest thing to an honest power broker by Western standards in Kandahar by this point. The outspoken Hamedi constantly took on shady elements in the business community,and went so far as to demolish a market controlled by questionable personalities. As far as Canadians could tell, Hamedi could not be bribed, which raised eyebrows among the provincial power brokers. Crippled by a lack of staff and suspicious of UN attempts to provide him

with assistants, Hamedi was involved in everything from power to water to economics. At this point Hamedi was involved in trying to sort out land clearance issues relating to the Kandahar City Bypass highway scheduled to go in south of the city. Hamedi knew that this multi-million dollar project was attracting all of the wrong elements and had the potential to destabilize the situation. Similarly, Hamedi was exceptionally concerned about the ongoing lack of clean water in Kandahar City. For some reason he preferred to deal with Canadian CIMIC, even after other elements tried to work with him. He did not trust the police and even threatened to release to the media a list of corrupt officials with details of their criminal activities, a move that made for volatile political dynamics.[306]

Hamedi was related to Governor Wesa which proved to be a key factor in achieving some level of coordination on city development projects. The PRT through CIMIC worked with both men, and assisted in coordinating the deployment of the District Development Program into the city districts in the same way District Development Assemblies worked in the rural areas. The issue, as always, was finding qualified and courageous Afghan personnel to take the lead.[307]

There was also a major prison riot at Sarposa prison, an event that was handled exceptionally well by the Corrections Canada-mentored prison security forces. Under pressure by the Deputy Governor to take violent action to end the situation, the staff was able to negotiate and segregate uprising leaders. There were no casualties.[308] As for violence in the city during this period, four serious IED attacks against police targets occurred in January, with IEDs found in various places nearly daily by police patrols. After a suicide car bomb prematurely detonated, the Afghan police, supported by the 97th MP Battalion, collected information and mounted Operation JANGYALAY in District 6. Though little was discovered, this was an Afghan National Police planned and led operation.[309]

On 18 January, there was a major coordinated Taliban attack against the Presidential Palace and other key government facilities in Kabul. The attacking forces used suicide bombers followed up by ground forces. Concerned about the possibility of a similar attack, all of the Afghan security force commanders in Kandahar City planned and executed Operation MAYWAND. Canadian observers were astounded. The scale of MAYWAND was dramatic, involving nearly 500 Afghan security personnel. MAYWAND received assistance from the OCC-P, Camp Nathan Smith provided coverage with its aerostat cameras, and 97th MP Battalion mentored some of the operations, but for the most part it was an Afghan show lasting nearly a week. Notably, the Afghan security forces were beguiled with the aerostat's capabilities. MAYWAND was assessed as having completely disrupted enemy activity in Kandahar City, and even encouraged some enemy leaders to depart the urban areas for some time.[310] The 97th MP Battalion analysed the situation and expressed concerns to TF Kandahar that

> due to increased security ops by Afghan National Police and 97 MP Bn, insurgents will likely change their tactics due to continuous failings with VBIED and IED attacks. They will likely revert to conducting assassinations, kidnappings, and roadside IEDs in an attempt to maintain influence over the local population.[311]

During the course of Operation MAYWAND, security operations thwarted four assassination attempts against prominent targets. The Afghan forces were so enraged that they initiated planning for MAYWAND II while MAYWAND was still in play. During this time 97th MP Battalion took over from the PRT as the battlespace commander for Kandahar City.

The enemy, frustrated by repeated failures, started to kill people who had low-level connections with the government. On 1 February, Khudi Dad Saha Agha, a construction worker from Dand, was found dead. Hours later, in separate incidents, a Shi'a religious leader was shot and killed, and three security contractors were gunned down in their vehicle in District 3 on their way home: two were related to Ahmad Wali Karzai. This last attack was clearly not a coincidence.[312] US Military Police were targeted the following day with an IED and immediately after that an IED strike killed four Afghan police.

MAYWAND II was followed by MAYWAND III and then MAYWAND IV, with Canadian support continuing as before at the OCC-P and from Camp Nathan Smith. The pressure on the enemy was so great that a religious personage approached coalition forces and offered to broker the reconciliation of four Taliban cell commanders in the city.[313] Canadian PSYOPS were tasked to monitor population attitudes during the MAYWAND series. The main question was this: what did the government need to provide to get people in the city to stop supporting the insurgents?

> The majority of local nationals responded to employment opportunities. Employment and electricity are the two components local nationals feel their government can do to make their life better, other than security. When asked what they want their government to do to develop Kandahar City, the majority responded with security. For local nationals, peace and security is defined as *sulha* (politeness and goodness), unity, and stability. Local national support the idea of peace with the Taliban, but feel that "peace with insurgents will never work because of foreign influence. They put too many conditions on peace."[314]

But there was not going to be any peace. Intimidated by the enhanced security, the Taliban initiated their assassination campaign on 24 February with the murder of Abdul Majid Babai, the former Director of Information and Culture for Afghanistan and a quiet advisor to Governor Wesa. Construction truck drivers living in District 10

found IEDs attached to their doors.[315] The systematic assassination of 'soft targets' by the insurgents was now on. The issue now for the coalition forces was the drain on the Afghan units in Kandahar Province demanded by Operation MOSHTARAK. It was possible that the pressure on the insurgents in Kandahar generated by the MAYWAND series would have to slacken because of the increased demand for resources in Helmand.[316] The only Canadian casualty in Kandahar City during this period was the accidental death of Cpl Joshua Baker of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment during what investigators later categorized as a poorly-led training event.

Provincial Development and Governance in Early 2010

As the Ménard headquarters sought to untangle itself from the web of development and governance issues and focus on the districts, the staff discovered that this process was easier said than done. Regional Command (South) supplanted the TF Kandahar-provincial government relationship more and more and, by late December, communicated that its development priorities would henceforth be education, health, and governance.[317] The mechanisms for the practical expression of these priorities remained to be built, but there was great hope in RC (South) circles that a new organization, the Regional Platform (South), might act as a 'super PRT'. Until that platform was established, however, the muddled relationships between TF Kandahar and the various governance and development entities continued into early 2010.

By early 2010 there was virtually no TF Kandahar involvement in the Dahla Dam project.[318] Manipulation of contracting by senior Afghan officials related to that project was reported on but seen as less and less relevant by TF Kandahar.[319]

As TF Kandahar's influence waned, it proved more and more difficult to leverage provincial matters to support Canadian operations. The policing linkages through the PRT, if not completely severed, were attenuated to the point where TF Kandahar increasingly used the OCC-P at the Palace as an influence mechanism on policing matters.[320] That said, however, the Canadian Head of Police played a major role later in assisting Dand policing efforts. As Dand was not officially a district, it did not have an approved police manning level (*Tashkil*). Until this governance anomaly was sorted out, there was no funding for police, which in turn had negative consequences for counterinsurgency operations in Dand. A variety of influence mechanisms were employed to establish an 'interim *Tashkil*' for Dand.[321]

A new focus on education in Kandahar Province cut across the Canadian province-district divide. Apparently driven by district-level leaders representing the views of their communities, school construction and staffing emerged in January 2010 as a "stabilization theme" in Regional Command (South) and PRT circles.[322] As school construction was

Photo Credit: Author

The Taliban and their allies looked at loading empty polio vaccine vials like this one with a chemical or biological agent in order to undermine the Canadian-supported vaccination programme.

also linked to the Canadian priorities, education in the districts was a possible line of rapprochement between TF Kandahar headquarters and the PRT. That eventually became reality later on.

Polio eradication receded significantly as a theme in the Canadian Army Kandahar narrative by early 2010, save for the fact that NGO operations in insurgent-controlled areas undermined the government's attempts to assert its authority. And, later in 2010, a raid on a compound in Daman district uncovered, in addition to a weapons cache, vials of live Polio culture, a microscope, and a centrifuge. Canadian analysis was that

> it is possible that insurgents were attempting to weaponize the bio agent by placing live culture in the empty vaccine vials and then redistributing the vials in an attempt to infect the local population … a Pakistan-based insurgent was aware that testing a possible chemical was conducted at an undisclosed location. The chemical had been administered to test subjects and subsequent reliable reporting indicated that these tests had failed.[323]

Once again, apologists for the insurgency who portrayed it as a series of disconnected attacks by aggrieved, unsophisticated locals were proved wrong.

On the governance front, the ongoing problem of government legitimacy remained. Reporting on the political situation suggested that

> There is growing consensus among Kandahar's local media, political commentators and the public that President Karzai's appointment of a new Cabinet will include a new Provincial Governor. The challenges Wesa's successor will face are daunting – intense international and local pressure to do more to rein in corruption and mitigate competing self-interests of power brokers ([in] particular Ahmad Wali Karzai). Despite President Karzai's promise to do more to end the perceived culture of impunity, Kandaharis remain skeptical that a stronger, more competent Governor will be appointed … TFK is most concerned that any new Governor carry enough *gravitas* from Kabul to effectively reach out to Kandaharis.[324]

No new replacement arrived, however, but the possibility that Gul Agha Sherzai might be brought back to Kandahar from Nangarhar to be the new governor excited the Kandahari power structure. Sherzai did come down to Kandahar and met with Ahmad Wali Karzai, who warily wanted to gauge Sherzai's intentions. Governor Wesa was, uncoincidentally, called up to Kabul for business during this time.[325] It is difficult to overstate the importance of this possible power shift to the Canadian effort. The Barakzais had probably (though not provably) been tacit supporters of the insurgency since 2005, when they had lost power to the Popalzais. Indeed, the decapitation of the Alikozai and Alizai tribes in Arghandab District and the Senjaray-Asheque area left only the Barakzais, the Popalzais, and the down-trodden Noorzais on their feet, and the Noorzais — the backbone of many local insurgencies — were badly battered. The return of a Barakzai governor (especially the powerful Gul Agha Sherzai) who could extend a hand to the Noorzais might have weakened the local insurgencies, while the externally based and supported component continued as before. Commercial violence between the factions might be reduced by an American-brokered rapprochement, or at least influenced by the vast financial capacity of the American troop influx and the related need for infrastructure. That was one possible future and, as they say, the jury remained out well into 2010.

Dand District Operations, January–February 2010

By all accounts, Dand District remained a success story in early 2010, with TF Kandahar engaging communities and their leadership through Stab B, the Construction Management Organization, the P-OMLT, and the battle group. Of course, enemy activity did not stop, but operations in Dand demonstrated what was possible with significant combined

Canadian–Afghan interest and involvement. Local work projects in all of the KALAY communities remained in play, with occasional contracting issues that were sorted out through negotiation assisted by the Construction Management Organization. In most cases it was a question of who was aligned with whom in a community and how that related to who got employment, that is, something not very different from municipal contracting issues in Canada. CIMIC noted repeatedly that maliks from villages on the edges of the KALAY area wanted similar irrigation and road projects for their communities.[326]

The Canadian *modus operandi* in Dand was to have CIMIC facilitate the CIDA district stability officer's ability to connect with larger provincial-level programs, while CIMIC and the Construction Management Organization maintained the momentum at the district and community levels with the Afghan authorities. For example, CIMIC and CIDA facilitated the work of the District Health Officer on his village rounds in Dand, and then ensured that he was supported at the provincial level. CIMIC and CIDA also cooperated in getting the UN organizations to provide aid to a camp for internally displaced persons on the boundary of Dand and District 5. This camp somehow escaped the notice of higher authorities.[327]

Dand became the scene of a new program called the Culturally Structured Youth Employment Program, better known as the Sons of Kandahar (formerly the Sons of Nakhonay). In essence, the Sons of Kandahar was either an Afghan Katimavik or related to Village Stability Operations programs, or both. The village maliks were approached by a Culturally Structured Youth Employment Program project leader and asked to provide 10 young men and one supervisor. They were given work uniforms and equipment. Their job included assisting in maintaining local roads and refurbishing mosques. Another task for the Sons was to identify needy families and then distribute locally purchased goods to sustain them through the winter. The reactions of the people in Belanday, New Mashor and Zor Mashor were noted by Construction Management Organization: they were "excited" at the possibility of undertaking this work in their communities.[328]

On the policing front, there was considerable qualitative progress in the face of bureaucratic intransigence. The Independent Directorate of Land Governance still refused to recognize Dand as a district and as a result there remained no formal *Tashkil* (approved manning level) for the police.[329] That state of affairs did not stop the district and provincial chiefs of police from providing effective community security. The district police chief and the National Directorate of Security worked together to stop an assassination plot against District Governor Nazek, and the provincial chief visited village militias to coax them into police training. The Dand police were now capable of independently deploying their quick reaction force to IED strikes and did so effectively when their patrols were attacked.[330]

There were only three IED attacks against Canadian forces over the course of two months, with no killed in action. The insurgency, however, continued to intimidate

the community of Gorgan, so much so that local people requested arms to resist them. Gorgan would have to wait, however. Task Force 72, tasked with setting up Village Stability Operations in Dand, were conducting a pilot project in Angurian but it was only in its preliminary stages.[331] Belanday also attracted Taliban attention: night letters were posted, and the malik, Sayed Gul Agha, was kidnapped.[332]

The main issue that emerged in Dand in early 2010 was governance. District Governor Nazek, who had maintained a superb relationship with the Canadians since 2008, suddenly distanced himself and started to interfere with security coordination in Dand, particularly when the provincial police chief boosted police capacity in the district. Nazek's obstructionism took several forms; for example, he wanted the OCC-D(D) separated from the District Centre. He ran hot and cold on the role of the District Development Assembly, depending on who was present. He was believed to have even staged a demonstration against the OCC-(D) on one occasion.[333]

Careful analysis pointed towards Nazek's brother, Fatay Khan , who was in charge of a private security company and a construction company. How Fatay Khan linked to Barakzai interests, or the Popalzai construction-security complex in Kandahar was unclear, but Khan's private security was driving around in Dand police Rangers and increasingly behaving, to Canadian observers, as a private militia for Nazek. Khan's interpreters manipulated CMO and CIMIC relationships with locals at the OCC-D(D) and the District Centre by providing false or misleading translations of complaints from local people. Khan security personnel were, apparently, accused of taking money from sub-contracted truckers working on CMO-supported projects. Locals went to Fatay Khan on security issues rather than going to the police.[334]

Nazek then threatened to resign and go to the media. Initial analysis was that

> … [Nazek attempted] to demonstrate this authority in front of local nationals … the fact that the OCC-D(D) [Operations Officer] handled the matter in a calm, inviting manner likely enraged [Nazek] further as he was not having his desired results and local nationals agreed with [the coalition forces]. Good communication between [OC Recce Squadron] and KPRT resolved what could have been the district leader trying to play two different units against one another to get his own way.[335]

TF Kandahar analysis suggested that:

> [Nazek's] actions signal his unhappiness with recent challenges to his authority, including increased Afghan Uniformed Police autonomy, District Shura assertiveness and the possible loss of his family's Private Security Company contracts, which are all positive indications of growing rule of law and governance in the area.[336]

Nazek may have been supportive and he may have been helpful, but he and his brother were now on a collision course with TF Kandahar objectives in Dand.

All in all, however, Canadian success in Dand up to this point was noted by Stab B when they visited Teymurian in late January:

> While speaking to the local nationals, they asked why we were no longer flying the Afghanistan flag. We told them that the old flag has been taken down and put up in the OCC-D(D) and the new flag has not yet arrived. The local nationals were quite interested as they "felt pride" having our flags fly side by side.[337]

On 19 February small teams of Taliban operatives entered the villages of Nakudak and Molla Kuchi and assassinated the mullahs in both communities. Like Kandahar City, the districts were about to experience an insidious assassination campaign directed against what TF Kandahar called 'soft targets.'[338]

Zharey District Operations, January–February 2010

Zharey was initially assessed as "stable" in early January. Even though local fighters remained behind and laid IEDs numerous enemy commanders had been killed or left for safe haven in Pakistan. The main problem for 1-12 Infantry was that 1st Kandak was about to be pulled out and sent to Helmand, leaving a significant security gap. As we will recall, 6th Kandak was an unmentored road protection kandak that was having issues acclimatizing to Zharey district. OMLT commander Col Shane Brennan worked with Brig Gen Basir to fill the security gap. Ultimately the decision was made by Kabul to man a fourth company in each of the three infantry kandaks in 1-205 Brigade. However, these companies were barely trained and were unmentored. Three were assigned to Zharey district by the end of January and the Canadian OMLT scrambled to deploy two mentor teams to work with them.[339]

Operation DALBOR SHIELD remained in effect, albeit without the resources it enjoyed in 2009. Despite the limitations, a CU-170 Heron was able to spot one emplacement team which was killed by an armed UAV. On another occasion a ScanEagle spotted for a B-1B bomber which engaged and eliminated another 'dig team.'[340]

The main problem area in Zharey remained the Asheque-Senjaray corridor. Three IED attacks, one of them a suicide bomber, killed a total of eight American soldiers throughout January and February 2010. There were six other IED incidents during this time that resulted in numerous Afghan military and civilian casualties. Bag-e Pol was "dirty," especially the police, and the local shop owners acted as spotters for the insurgents. Attempts were made to provide development projects in the area, including a school, but it was an uphill battle for the Canadian CIMIC team and the American District Support Team. The injection of

CERP money by 1-12 Infantry helped move the projects incrementally forward, but there was just no buy-in from the local power brokers, including the police.[341]

A Canadian police mentoring team came back to Zharey but found that corruption remained rampant under Bismullah Jan, who had, amazingly, remained in place all of this time. Jan was not usually available, so the Canadian mentors deployed to the police checkpoints to conduct counter-IED, rule of law, and first aid training on site with each police platoon. The police in Bag-e Pol remained extremely problematic and were believed to have been thoroughly infiltrated by the insurgents.[342]

Governance in Zharey remained a hollow shell. An estimated 200 insurgents from Helmand bedded down in the district interior for the winter combined with the fact that community leaders on the various shuras and assemblies did not actually dwell in Zharey reduced District Leader Sahardi's influence to those communities along Highway 1. The façade of development assembly work continued, with Canadian CIMIC and the American District Support Team working to do what it could with what it had. USAID did some cash for work projects but the only significant project the developers could get off the ground was a school in Bag-e Pol. Even then it was blocked by local power brokers. The surreal nature of district politics continued when Essa Khan from the insurgent-controlled Sangsar community showed up to the District Development Assembly. The ostensible reason provided was that Khan was a friend of the district governor. In time, an audit team from somewhere, perhaps Kandahar, maybe Kabul, arrived in late January. Sahardi was "on edge" and it looked like he might be fired. TF Kandahar attempted to get the district chief of police fired. It was unclear to Canadian observers whether Sahardi or Jan was the problem, but one had to go if any further movement was to be made in Zharey district.[343]

The best that TF Kandahar could hope for, given the limitations imposed on the district by Operation MOSHTARAK and by the nearly impossible governance and policing situation, was to keep Highway 1 open and the enemy disrupted as far away to the south as possible.

Air Wing Operations

The Joint Task Force Afghanistan Air Wing, still called Task Force Silver Dart, continued to stabilize throughout 2009. At BGen Ménard's insistence, the new Wing Commander, Col Christian Drouin, was instructed to provide a task force designator for each of the Wing's elements. TF Freedom was the new name for the Canadian Helicopter Force (Afghanistan) which remained equipped with eight CH-146 Griffons and six CH-147 Chinooks. The former Canadian Heron UAV Detachment, populated with former Aurora patrol aircraft crews, became TF Erebus, while the Theatre Support Element with its varying numbers of CC-130's and CC-17's and the Mission Support Squadron was now called TF Canuck.

There were at this point 450 Air Wing personnel. On the organizational chart, the CCAT leased helicopters were on a dotted line to TF Silver Dart: their maverick ex-Soviet pilots flew two KA-32 HELIX and four Mi-8 HIP transport machines. The shadowy Special Operations Air Detachment was also in town, with its non-standard machinery as well. Drouin and the other TACHEL crews kept referring to the Wing as the "Aviation Battalion," to some of the more deeply blue-hued air force leadership's chagrin.[344] Medical evacuation remained in the hands of the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force with their UH-160 Black Hawk and HH-60 PAVE Hawk helicopters and paramedics based at Kandahar Air Field.[345]

TF Freedom's primary mission was to ensure that sustainment operations for the forces fighting in the western districts were not dependent on the roads with the objective of reducing the number of IED attacks and thus casualties. Sustainment in this case included the delivery of supplies as well as rotation of personnel for reinforcement, replacement, or HLTA.[346]

The most important development during this time was the deployment of the MX-15 sensor package for the CH-146 Griffons. This ball camera system gave the helicopters a surveillance capability similar to the UAV's. Steps were taken to push real-time imagery to appropriate end users in TF Kandahar, but this proved problematic for the time being. Four of these systems were available in November 2009, and by March 2010 all eight Griffons were equipped with the MX-15.[347]

The concept of the Griffon Weapons Team emerged alongside the deployment of the MX-15. 408 Squadron, led by LCol Jeff "Smytty" Smyth, twinned an MX-15 equipped Griffon with a M-134D Dillon Gatling Gun equipped Griffon. One aircraft spotted, while the other shot. The Griffon Weapons Team proved invaluable when dealing with fleeting targets like illegal insurgent checkpoints and their early warning spotters. With the appropriate rules of engagement, these two troublesome types of enemy activity could be rapidly suppressed. The primary mission of the Griffon, however, was to escort the CH-147 Chinooks as they went about the business of aerial resupply and air assault. The secondary mission was to support the ground forces during TICs. These were 'spur of the moment' events whereby a Griffon Weapons Team was cut away from escort during a ground forces engagement: the Chinook was escorted to the FOB it was heading for, then the Griffons went hunting. As the crews built up experience and the drain from HLTA diminished later in the tour, Colonel Drouin initiated a ground standby alert posture for a Griffon Weapons Team so they could respond within minutes to TICs involving Canadian forces. This capability was not declared to Regional Command (South) and remained a Canadian 'hip pocket' capability.[348]

Other tactics that integrated UAVs with Griffon Weapons Teams and air assault operations were developed during this rotation. For example, a CU-170 Heron UAV would be sent forward to spot a landing zone. The Griffon Weapons Team would come in to confirm and suppress anything spotted by the UAV, and the Chinooks would deposit the troops or conduct a MEDEVAC.[349] Col Drouin and his staff assessed that "When we show up, everybody hides. Is this an effect we want? Yes. It calms things down, it suppresses." Enemy fighters exfiltrating an area because of the presence of helicopters were then spotted by CU-170s, tracked, and targeted by whatever aviation or air asset was available at the time.[350]

The issue of pooling Canadian air assault capabilities with Regional Command (South) emerged in 2009-2010. One of the problems that emerged from the investigation into the Griffon crash at Qalat in the summer of 2009 was that the Canadian helicopters were not equipped with long-range communications capability and thus it was difficult to maintain command and control once they departed the Kandahar area. Indeed, the Canadian helicopter force was deployed outside of Kandahar province almost as much as it was employed within it, which reduced coverage of the Canadian area of operations by Canadian aircraft. When Regional Command (South) split into two commands and the RC (South) area was reduced, the decision was made to limit Canadian helicopter operations to Kandahar province as much as possible. Col Drouin believed that his crews were being pressured to go and operate from places that were not capable of supporting Griffon operations. The machine was not compatible with other allied aircraft and their supporting facilities.[351]

The fact that the CU-170 Herons were rented systems could at times be problematic. TF Kandahar wanted more UAV coverage now that more American systems were being cut away for American national purposes commensurate with the influx. Instead of merely increasing the UAV sortie rate and applying additional sustainment resources to the machines, a laborious process was initiated to get the Canadian government to agree to pay the contractor more money so they could increase the sortie rate. This took three months and had to go all the way to Cabinet. In the meantime, BGen Ménard, who had been briefed on Operation APPLANIX, requested the deployment of CP-140 Auroras with their MX-20 cameras. This was denied and he was told that the aircraft lacked the defensive capabilities to operate in this role. Instead, the Air Wing pushed the limits of man, machine, and contract verbiage and squeezed 630 hours of coverage out of one CU-170 which amounted to 21 hours of coverage out of 24 for several weeks.[352]

In 2009 and 2010 there was more creative use of the Air Wing's CC-130 Hercules transport aircraft. The dramatically expanded night fighting capabilities exhibited throughout the war in Afghanistan led to significant innovations, one of which was called

Black Illumination. Night vision systems were mostly directional, that is, night vision goggles or sensors on Coyotes were pointed like a search light on a given target. Black Illumination involved the dropping of infrared flares to 'light up' large areas, except that only those using night vision equipment could see what was being illuminated.[353]

The U.S. Marine Corps forces operating in Helmand were already using Black Illumination and, with the influx of American units into Kandahar, it was possible that the capability would prove useful to both Canadian and American forces. Col Drouin sent personnel from the CC-130 crews for training with the U.S. Marine unit and on 19 March 2010 the first Canadian Black Illumination mission was flown. This involved the use of a Griffon-escorted Chinook carrying U.S. Army sniper teams that were inserted into the hills north of Asheque in Zharey district. A CU-170 Heron established the pattern of life first, then the insertion took place. All of this activity was conducted underneath a Canadian CC-130 dropping IR flares. Other allied organizations operating in Kandahar province found this Canadian capability interesting and useful. These other organizations, incidentally, were also able to eat and drink in some cases because the Canadian CC-130 Hercules transports were also capable of conducting Container Delivery System drops using a computer-guided steerable parachute system.[354]

Supporting TF Kandahar

The 450-person National Support Element commanded by LCol Jim Jensen was initially not structurally different from its predecessor organizations: the NSE had a maintenance company, a supply and transport company (with a force protection platoon), a camp services company, and a logistic operations centre, as well as 300 or so CANCAP and CFPSA civilian augmentees. As the concept of operations for TF Kandahar changed, so did the concept for support. The initial NSE laydown outside of Kandahar Air Field had NSE detachments at FOB Wilson, FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar, and the Dand District Centre. With the American influx, however, there were significant changes during this rotation.[355]

The first change involved FOB Wilson, which initially supported 300 Canadian troops but by December 2009 there were 700 American troops from TF 1-12 Infantry in location. Second was Camp Nathan Smith, home of the PRT. When the decision to reduce the Canadian Army footprint there occurred in February and the influx of Americans from 97th MP Battalion took place, command of the remaining Canadian units at Camp Nathan Smith was transferred to the NSE. Similarly, the NSE detachment supporting Maj Mark Popov's Recce Squadron in Dand district was reduced as TF 1-71 Cavalry took over in March. Over in Panjwayi, however, the dispersion of 1 PPCLI Battle Group into its new configuration in the eastern part of that district necessitated changes to how they were resupplied.[356]

The NSE continued to use ground Combat Logistics Patrols and contracted helicopter support to handle the new dispositions. Helicopter support changed to some extent during this rotation as the dedicated overwatch of each combat logistics patrol was ended. The significant increase in American and Canadian helicopters in the air over Kandahar province meant that it was relatively easy to get support quickly in any event. The Canadian CH-147 Chinooks tended to be used for air assault and logistic support for units that were temporarily outside of the NSE support envelope, while the CCAT contract Mi-17's and Ka-25's handled resupply to the Canadian units in their operating locations, assuming that the threat level was low.[357]

The risk level became an issue during this time as the contractor helicopters refused to fly into a forward operating base if it had been given Red status, that is, there was a small arms threat to aircraft. Who, exactly, determined what locations were Red was debatable, so the NSE became involved in dealing with the contractors and Regional Command (South) in order to clarify what constituted Red criteria. A satisfactory solution was arrived at and resupply operations continued.[358]

In addition to supporting the deployed Canadian forces, the NSE played a significant role in the American influx. None of the incoming American units, TF 1-12 Infantry, TF 1-71 Cavalry, TF 2 Fury, or 97th MP Battalion came from the same brigade. American units tended to not operate independently at the battalion level, so the support structure at Kandahar Air Field for these four units was relatively ad hoc and at the same time did not have the contracting capacity necessary for 'life support' in forward operating locations. In many cases, the Canadian NSE picked up the significant amount of slack. For example, the 700 Americans arriving at FOB Wilson did so without a field kitchen or the ability to produce fresh rations, a state of affairs that frustrated the TF 1-12 Infantry command staff to no end. They would not have this capability for nearly three months due to contracting issues. As a result the NSE's three cooks at FOB Wilson fed 700 American and 150 Canadian troops. Hard rations for a full three months would have posed significant morale problems for this incoming unit, which TF Kandahar needed to be fully operational to handle Zharey district.[359]

A second example was the deployment of TF 1-71 Cavalry to Dand district. They had construction capacity in the form of a U.S. Navy Construction Battalion but the American logistics unit at Kandahar Air Field did not have the distributed logistics capacity to deploy the basic materials necessary for TF 1-71 Cavalry's infrastructure to Dand. The Canadian NSE ensured that those materials were deposited in the right place in Dand and that local contracts were established to assist in the construction. This, incidentally, led to jobs in Dand which kept fighting-age males off the streets.[360]

A third area involved the NSE's Mobile Recovery Teams. The increased frequency of vehicular traffic in, through, and around Kandahar City meant that there were inevitable breakdowns and casualties due to enemy action. As TF 1-12 Infantry and TF 2 Fury deployed into Zharey and Arghandab, Canadian recovery teams worked interchangeably with American MRT equivalents since Canadian teams had substantial local ground knowledge and contacts to draw on.[361]

NSE maintainers had to repair new equipment during this rotation. These included LAV RWS vehicles with their sensor packages, and the PSS aerostats and RAID towers with their computer-driven camera systems. The balloon camera systems had no trained maintenance people accompanying them, as the systems were off the shelf. Cpl J.T. Salois, a fire control systems technician and self-taught computer specialist, determined while he was assembling the systems that he could increase their capabilities in terms of range and information processing. As a result the PSS surveillance capability for Panjwayi district dramatically improved with positive security effects.[362]

An additional task undertaken by the NSE was a mentoring relationship with 1-205 Brigade's Combat Service Support 5th Kandak. Mandated by BGen Ménard, the NSE provided a variety of low-level assistance packages. These were very basic due to the lack of educational capacity and technical expertise in the Afghan kandak. The fundamentals of material handling equipment, how to run a warehouse, and the safe handling of equipment were the priority tasks, along with driver training. The Afghans, however, had no spares, no tools and contracted out almost everything they could. Attempts to conduct combined combat logistics patrols ran into issues relating to dissimilar rules of engagement and differing tactical procedures because of the non-compatible vehicles and communications systems.[363]

Operation MOSHTARAK, February 2010

There were several aspects of Operation MOSHTARAK ('Together') in Helmand Province that are important to the Canadian Army's narrative in Afghanistan. First, there was the participation of Canadian units in the operation itself and the issues surrounding their deployment. Second, the larger implications of the operation highlighted in bold face for the coalition the fundamental problems that Canada and the coalition were running into in Kandahar province. These could no longer be deferred.

Operation MOSHTARAK had multiple objectives. At the operational level, the district of Nad Ali west of Lashkar Gah was riddled with insurgents who operated from the network of canals and villages and sortied out to harass the capital. One such festering boil was the town of Marjah. A phased operation to clear this place out was a useful exercise in any event even if it was just 'mowing the lawn.' There were, however, larger concerns.

ISAF commander Gen McChrystal was looking for an operation that could act as a proof of concept for Clear-Hold-Build on a larger scale, one that would bring in President Karzai, the governor, and senior Afghan leadership to emphasize the Build, and one that would have strategic information operations effects outside of Afghanistan.[364] Regional Command (South) was tasked to find a location to achieve these objectives.

Not surprisingly, the British-led Regional Command (South) looked to Helmand as an appropriate arena and made the argument that MOSHTARAK would be 'proof of concept' for a similar operation in Kandahar Province in the future. To conduct the operation would, of course, mean stripping forces from Kandahar Province and redeploying them to Helmand, once again. British personnel and their publicists breathlessly lauded the fact that Regional Command (South) was acting as a command again and 'gripping' its wayward subordinate national task forces.[365] That attitude, naturally, annoyed the Canadians in Task Force Kandahar.

TF Kandahar looked at the planning and saw that it would lose access to a number of enablers when the operation was mounted. First, the UAV strike capability would be sucked away to the west (the limitations of the decision to rent the unarmed Heron and not buy Predator or Reaper were now exposed). So would part of TF Thor, the American route clearance packages working Highway 1. Close air support, which Canada did not deploy to Afghanistan, would also be significantly reduced.[366]

There was worse to come. The powers that be at Regional Command (South) and in Kabul convinced the Afghan Ministry of Defence that one of the kandaks in 1-205 Brigade had to go too, along with its OMLT mentors. Why higher level Canadian diplomatic pressure was not brought to bear to prevent this remains unclear. The effects of stripping out 1st Kandak from its positions where it was patrolling and making contact with the local population on a daily basis, and sending it to a completely foreign province was clearly problematic, especially along Highway 1, so three untrained Afghan infantry companies not indigenous to 1-205 Brigade were brought in from elsewhere to backfill. At the same time, experienced soldiers from 1st Kandak were being poached by special forces to join the Commando Kandak again, thus reducing 1st Kandak capacity further.[367]

Then there was the inexplicable desire on the part of Regional Command (South) to conduct the largest airmobile operation of the war. That meant that the Canadian helicopter force would also be stripped away as well, including three Chinooks and four Griffons. As a result, TF Kandahar had to reduce its operational tempo for most of February. This had spill-over effects well into the tenure of the next battle group.[368]

Photo Credit: Author

The bulk of the Canadian helicopter force deployed to Helmand Province for Operation MOSHTARAK, billed as the largest airmobile operation of the war.

The NATO press releases virtually ignored Canada's contribution and pumped up the British and American forces' involvement,[369] so TF Kandahar loaded Canadian journalists onto the helicopters to cover the "largest airmobile operation ever conducted by ISAF in Afghanistan." 1st Kandak and its Canadian mentors deployed to Helmand on 21 January into a holding area while the other forces assembled. Then the whole operation was put on hold because President Karzai would not make up his mind if MOSHTARAK should be launched or not: his staff told General McChrystal that the President had a cold.[370]

LCol Jeff Smyth and TF Freedom learned about Operation MOSHTARAK towards the end of December 2009. TF Freedom and TF Jaguar, the UK helicopter force, were put on notice for a large airmobile operation (the Afghan army air corps was supposed to be involved, but General Rezziq Sherzai, who controlled the handful of Mi-17s at Kandahar Air Field, had those machines allocated for other purposes). The area that the Canadian helicopters would be operating was dubbed the CAT: Chahar-e Anjin Triangle.[371] (see Figure 6-11)

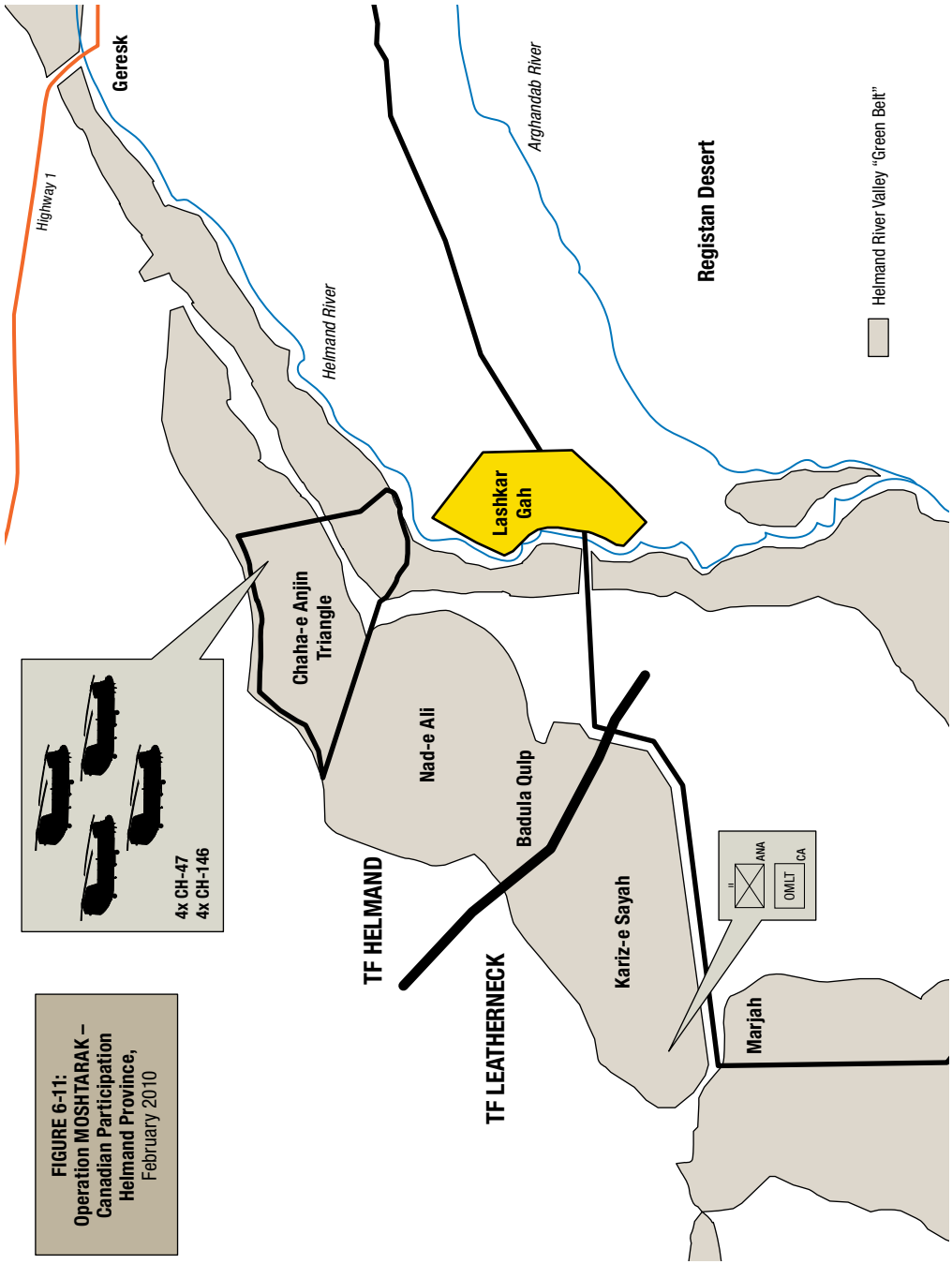

FIGURE 6-11: Operation MOSHTARAK – Canadian Participation Helmand Province, February 2010

Figure 6-11: Operation MOSHTARAK – Canadian Participation, Helmand Province, February 2010

Four CH-147D Chinooks and four CH-146 Griffons deployed to Camp Bastion in Helmand Province on 8 February. There they linked up with their British, U.S. Marine, and U.S. Army counterparts and conducted loading and unloading drills with the Afghan, British, Dutch and Estonian troops they would insert. Operational security was tight: one Afghan soldier was caught calling home on his cell phone during one loading exercise because he thought the operation was being launched. There was no real hope of strategic surprise, however, given the nature of the operation. Only tactical surprise was possible.[372]

When the decision to finally launch Operation MOSHTARAK was made, a carefully coordinated 'black illum' mission was conducted by U.S. Marine Corps C-130 Hercules over the target areas. TF Freedom launched at 0330 in the morning on 13 February. LCol Smyth led in a CH-146 Griffon, manning the MX-15 sensor system to observe the helicopter landing zones. A British MQ-9 Reaper orbited above them. Both systems gave overhead and slant observation of the target area. They were accompanied by a British Sea King carrying a large sensor system for observing ground movement.

The first mission was to insert a special operations task force at 0334 hours. The initial target area for the conventional forces was, by an interesting coincidence, the Spin Masjed area that 2nd (Strike) Kandak and their Canadian mentors defended in years past. After all of the surveillance systems determined there was no observable enemy present, the Canadian Chinooks went in and deposited the British troops to secure the area at 0413 hours.[373] A second lift took the Estonians into a blocking position to the east at 0428 and the final lift of British troops went in at 0453 hours. There was no contact and there were no incidents. Thereafter the helicopters remained available for quick reaction force tasks.[374]

Col Shane Brennan at the OMLT was skeptical about the new focus on Helmand. "All of a sudden the number one priority in RC South was Helmand, not Kandahar…. Why was that more important than the Kandahar region? It just rang hollow, quite frankly. I mean, there was nothing more important than the Kandahar area! And that remains to this day. What happens in Helmand may not shape the whole of Afghanistan, what happens in Kandahar could….".[375] The decision was made by the Afghans to deploy a kandak. Would Canadian OMLT mentors go too? Brennan and Ménard had to sort that out. Ménard ultimately made the decision to deploy them because according to Brennan "If your boss is telling you hard to do certain things, you're going to probably try to do those things pretty hard. You're going to try and work with the ISAF direction that you're given and use all the resources and advice from your own people to try and shape that."[376]

The Canadian OMLT, however, was going to be difficult to sustain all the way over in Helmand. As a result, the National Support Element ensured there was adequate helicopter capacity through British sources and deployed one of its two heavy Mobile Recovery Team AHSVS wreckers there with the OMLT.[377]

1st Kandak and their Canadian mentors operated north of Marjah and encountered enemy forces in several short, sharp actions. On 18 February, an Afghan army patrol was hit and took several casualties. Medical Technician Cpl Bradley Casey, while under fire, administered to Afghan wounded and, while still under fire, got them aboard a MEDEVAC helicopter. Cpt Casey was awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.

Despite a quick and successful Clear, the so-called 'government in a box' stabilization package brought in behind it proved difficult to implement. MOSHTARAK became yet another example of 'mowing the lawn' or 'taking out the garbage' except it was attempted on a larger scale. Operation MOSHTARAK was ultimately derided by journalists and declared a failure by analysts once the insurgents re-infiltrated the MOSHTARAK operating area. The violence started up again a month afterwards.[378]

What everyone overlooked at the time was that MOSHTARAK was undermined even before the first troops crossed the start line. Part of the Hold and Build phases were, as before, dependent upon police. A decision was made to remove Helmand police from the operation because of their connections to "malign actors" and substitute Afghan Civil Order Police (ANCOP) for the cleared areas. Those ANCOP units were Tajik-dominated and viewed as occupation forces by the local Pashtun population.[379] In addition, the ANCOP were supposed to be employed for a six-month period but Karzai's Ministry of the Interior would only commit them for four, and possibly a few as three months. That, as one report noted, "will not provide sufficient time for Task Force Helmand and Task Force Leatherneck to properly train the ANP force that is scheduled to relieve the ANCOP force. This situation is made worse by the failure of the Ministry of the Interior to appoint a Nad Ali Chief of Police….".[380] But the failure was not limited to the Ministry of the Interior. The problem went deeper and higher:

> The former Helmand Governor and current Senator Sher Mohammad [Akhundzada] arrived with Minister Atmar and the rest of the Kabul delegation [to the Nad Ali tribal shura], and he was joined at the shura by former Helmand police chief Abdul Rahman Jan; both men were driven from their previous positions in Helmand as a result of their corrupt activities. Throughout the day, these two former leaders of Helmand worked the room and actively lobbied against the former Marjah deputy district governor Haji Zahir. These former officials retain great influence over the people of Nad Ali and much of the province, and seemed determined to play a role in the future governance of Nad Ali. (Comment: SMA and ARJ have the potential of re-establishing the old corrupt system that previously ruled Marjah, and this would be a serious setback to the advancement of better governance in Helmand. SMA still enjoys direct access to Karzai, and he could use his business relationship with ARJ to block better governance in Nad Ali.[381]

When MOSHTARAK was underway, these two malign actors from the dark days of 2006 moved to get 'their' police into Nad Ali and were instrumental in interfering with local shuras to the point that "ARJ's leadership of the shura has locals terrified that he will be part of the final political solution." Maj Gen Carter was forced to appeal to entities in Kabul to apply pressure on Karzai "to prevent a scenario that places the powerbrokers in control of the ANP and other positions of leadership." This had to be stopped "because they are in part the reason we are in the fight we are today and would undermine rather than advance any long-term political solution…."[382] It was back to business as usual for Sher Mohammad Akhundzada and Abdul Rahman Jan, courtesy of President Karzai, Operation MOSHTARAK, and the 'government in a box'. It is not surprising that many locals welcomed the insurgents back into their communities, and the violence continued.

Operation MOSHTARAK demonstrated that ISAF and the Afghan army could work together and do everything right: they could gain tactical success on the ground, they could interact effectively with the population, they could facilitate local development initiatives. Operation MOSHTARAK also demonstrated how national and provincial power brokers could seriously undermine governance and stability efforts and, ultimately, exposed to ISAF's leadership how President Hamid Karzai was tacitly supporting this activity. Something like Operation MOSHTARAK was scheduled to be mounted in Kandahar province next. What was the nature of the political terrain that its successor operation had to operate in?

The Neutralization of Mullah Baradar

Towards mid-February Task Force Kandahar became aware that Mullah Baradar, the primary military leader in the Mullah Omar-led Quetta Shura, had been placed in some form of custody inside Pakistan by Pakistani authorities.[383] The exact circumstances remain unclear in the public domain. As he was the primary leader coordinating Taliban and associated activity in southern Afghanistan, the neutralization of Mullah Baradar should have had some measurable effect on the course of the Canadian campaign in Kandahar province. Coming at the end of the winter fighting season, Baradar's apprehension highlighted those facets of the insurgent campaign that the Quetta Shura could directly control as opposed to ones it could not.

There were other important implications that derived from Baradar's apparent removal from the field. There were two basic theories about his status: he was either an outright prisoner of the Pakistanis or that he was in some form of protective custody to protect him from another entity.[384] There were also several theories as to why he was in this state. The first was that there was some form of internal power struggle in the Quetta Shura over strategy and how to implement it in Afghanistan, and that Baradar was 'shopped' to the Pakistanis out of jealousy by a rival or someone who wanted him out of the way.

A variant of this was that Baradar tried to take over the Quetta Shura and was thwarted in the same way. It was possible that Baradar had had enough, walked away, and was picked up because he knew too much. It was equally possible that he quarreled with the ISI, Al Qaeda, or HiG representatives over some matter and was apprehended.[385]

Another possibility, one that took hold in some circles, was that Baradar was Mullah Omar's representative to highly discreet peace talks with the Karzai government in 2009.[386] One report suggests that he met with Karzai representatives during the Hajj in Saudi Arabia. As previously seen (in the Prologue to Volume I), certain Pakistani elements did not want Afghan insurgents making independent peace overtures to the Afghan government.[387] Clearly, Baradar knew far too much about ISI support to the insurgency to be left in circulation.[388]

As to who Baradar might have been meeting in the Afghan government, that remains speculative. One report suggests it was none other than Ahmad Wali Karzai who was the intermediary, or possibly Qayyum Karzai.[389] This may account for the decision by ISAF leaders to back off on Ahmad Wali Karzai's removal in late 2009 and may also account for his arrogant 'red line' crossing behavior in early 2010. If he was the anointed intermediary, he had nothing to lose. Indeed, BGen Ménard noticed on arrival in late 2009 that Ahmad Wali Karzai was attempting to maintain a low profile and ensured that the path between his illicit activities and himself was increasingly littered with numerous cut outs.[390]

Baradar's removal from circulation generated significant turbulence in the southern Afghan insurgency. It remains equally possible that Ahmad Wali Karzai was used as a tool to locate and get to Baradar by anti-Taliban forces or other elements and cause him to be apprehended. Or it may be a combination of factors. It may even have been sheer luck. Though some accounts credit the CIA with taking Baradar, his seizure took the intelligence staff at Regional Command (South) by surprise and it took three days for the White House to confirm that it was, in fact, Baradar who had been seized.[391] That said, Baradar's neutralization was a particularly important event and the effects on the Kandahar insurgency were felt throughout the rest of 2010.

Ahmad Wali Karzai and Government Legitimacy in Kandahar Province

The situation as it stood in 2009–2010 led to a re-examination of the role of Ahmad Wali Karzai in Kandahar politics and a debate over just how central his malignant activities were in fueling of the insurgency in the province. Discussions on this extremely sensitive topic had for the most part been deferred for months, if not years. The American influx and McChrystal's own perspective proved to be key enablers in getting the discussion started, particularly after the fiasco of the 2009 elections and everybody's renewed interest in the connection between governance and legitimacy.

The existing schools of thought on Karzai were these. The first was that he was a 'lovable rogue' entrepreneur who only wanted what was best for his tribe, the Popalzais. He was an elected official, therefore the coalition had to work with him, not against him. The second was that Karzai was a ruthless and malevolent narco-khan behind the façade, eliminating tribal and commercial rivals as well as the insurgents, who essentially were the same people to him. The third view was that Karzai was allegedly a CIA asset, therefore whatever he did was sanctioned by the American government and therefore he could not be touched and had to be accommodated. The fourth view was that since he was the President's half-brother, whatever he did was sanctioned by the Afghan government and therefore he could not be touched and had to be accommodated.[392]

This was not just a matter for the 'echelons above reality'. As we have seen thus far in this volume Canadian soldiers in the field had to contend with the effects of Ahmad Wali Karzai's choices and his behavior in various dimensions. Canadian commanders had to work alongside his allies and subordinates in the field. It is likely that Canadians died and were wounded as a result of these behaviors. At the very least, the average Canadian soldier in the field had to deal with friction generated by Karzai's machinations and that affected operations. It took serious scrutiny in 2009-2010 to sketch out the dimensions of the problem. Could these matters now be addressed?

What was known by Canadian commanders in Kandahar was that Ahmad Wali Karzai was involved in several illicit and licit activities, all of which undermined the legitimacy of the provincial government, and especially with the non-Popalzai population. Attempts to pin down Karzai on the narcotics front were elusive and this is where the bulk of coalition investigative energy was deployed, perhaps on purpose. Karzai was, however, suspected of involvement in human trafficking, specifically, profiting from the transport of cheap labour to the United Arab Emirates. This was connected to his involvement in running a housing scam that put people into debt slavery that in turn fueled the former activity. He was involved in the appropriation and re-sale of land in areas that he knew would be useful to ISAF: the Kandahar City Southern Bypass, specifically, was one of these. Karzai was also behind the drive to centralize all private security forces in Kandahar province under the Watan Security Company, which he effectively controlled, though he denied this publicly. At the same time he pushed for the Afghan Public Protection Force, a militia that would be sanctioned by the Afghan government to act as an umbrella for the security companies. Through the security companies, he was involved in providing trucking services to ISAF at Kandahar Air Field. He was known to run a private prison in Daman district and use his security forces to apprehend people to this site in order to coerce them for financial and political reasons.[393]

Although Ahmad Wali Karzai was not directly and provably linked to all these activities, he acted, as one knowledgeable Canadian officer put it, to "create the conditions where these activities could be facilitated" by others allied to him. In any event, regardless of the presence or absence of detailed legal proofs, the non-Popalzai population of the province and those on the receiving end believed that these activities were taking place, and were not inclined to support a Karzai-run Popalzai government. In 2010, Col Simon Hetherington, Deputy Commander of TF Kandahar, spoke of Ahmad Wali Karzai as a "grievance generator" who "fuelled the insurgency".[394]

It was ISAF Commander Gen Stanley McChrystal who took the lead in dealing with the situation. The possibility of having Ahmad Wali Karzai removed was discussed at a high level in November 2009 but the decision was made to collect negative data on him to prove the case. That decision was viewed by some as a stalling tactic by those who simply did not want to confront this issue. In March 2010 there was another high-level meeting involving American, British, and Canadian representatives. The options were: to press to have Ahmad Wali Karzai appointed ambassador of, say, Paraguay; or the 'block and check' option, that is, draw 'red lines in the sand' and declare that he would be removed if he crossed them. Apparently McChrystal favored removal, as did the Canadian representative, but the other American and British representatives present stayed on the fence.[395]

The three red lines were established: There would be no attempt by Karzai to influence the upcoming peace jirga in Kandahar; he was not to influence or interfere with the make-up of the provincial council; and he was to avoid any form of electoral interference. Those leaning to the 'red lines' solution were influenced by the belief that if Ahmad Wali Karzai and his supporters and allies were interfered with, there would be a massive resupply problem for ISAF in southern Afghanistan because of Karzai's control over trucking and the security forces associated with it. There were concerns that ISAF casualties would rise as a result of that behavior.[396]

Ahmad Wali Karzai ultimately crossed all three of the red lines and became even more belligerent towards ISAF in Kandahar in 2010. At the Peace Jirga, an elder told the assembled people, including Hamid Karzai, that he was afraid to speak out because he would be killed. When Karzai told him it was safe and he would be protected, the elder told the president that his brother-in-law was the problem. In a matter of days, this elder was killed. Word spread throughout the province what happened. The message was: Speak out against the Popalizais and die. It was unclear what emboldened Ahmad Wali Karzai. Speculation was rampant that a Washington D.C. meeting between President Karzai and President Obama resulted in a 'leave his brother alone' policy. Whether this was connected to activities the Karzais had conducted on behalf of the United States in other areas,

or not, became part of the debate even though substantial distance between the American administration and Hamid Karzai had been generated in those areas in the past two years.[397] As one observer noted:

> Our success will ultimately depend on President Karzai's having a similar vision, and he will be under considerable pressure to support malign actors like Sher Mohammad Akhundzada, Abdul Rahman Jan, and Ahmad Wali Karzai and others in Helmand and Kandahar whose interests lie in maintaining parallel governance structures and biased tribal ties in lieu of a more representative [Government of Afghanistan] presence.[398]

But before anything could be done about Ahmad Wali Karzai, and just as MOSHTARAK's successor operation for Kandahar was building up steam, Gen McChrystal was himself caught in the gears of American politics. His resignation, one of several forced on ISAF leaders during the summer of 2010, threw uncertainty into the coalition effort. Among the other affected ISAF leaders were TF Kandahar commander BGen Daniel Ménard, and the commanding officer of one of TF Kandahar's American battalions. By mid-2010, the combined effects of domestic politics, personal affairs, and heavy media scrutiny had nearly derailed Canadian efforts in Kandahar Province.

ENDNOTES

1. JTF-A HQ DSR (4 September 2009).
2. As depicted in Kai Eide, *Power Struggle Over Afghanistan* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2012), pages 99–102.
3. See National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, "The 2009 Presidential and Provincial Council Elections in Afghanistan," at http://www.ndi.org/files/Elections_in_Afghanistan_2009.pdf.
4. Sherard Cowper-Coles, *Cables From Kabul* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), *pages* 202–203.
5. "Afghanistan Elections 2009: Canada's Programming," www.afghanistan.gc.ca/canada-afghanistan/progress-progres/elections.aspx?lang=eng&view=d.
6. International Crisis Group, "Asia Briefing No 96: Afghanistan: Elections and the Crisis of Governance" (25 November 2009).
7. WikiLeaks message, U.S. Embassy Kabul to State, "Karzai on Elections and the Future" (3 September 2009).
8. Eide, *Power Struggle Over Afghanistan*, chapter 20.
9. Cowper-Coles, *Cables from Kabul*, page 235.
10. International Crisis Group "Asia Briefing No 117: Afghanistan's Election Stalemate" (23 February 2011).
11. International Crisis Group, "Asia Briefing No 96: Afghanistan: Elections and the Crisis of Governance" (25 November 2009).
12. www.afghanistanelection.org/elections/2009/data, directly based on IEC, ECC, and UNDP-ELECT data.
13. *Ibid*.

14. National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, "The 2009 Presidential and Provincial Council Elections in Afghanistan" (2010).
15. *Ibid*. There were other, more sophisticated, forms of fraud. See Peter W. Galbraith, "How the Afghan Election Was Rigged," *Time* (19 October 2009).
16. WikiLeaks message, U.S. Embassy Kabul to State, "Engaging Karzai's Inner Circle on Elections and a Second Term" (26 October 2009).
17. WikiLeaks message, U.S. Embassy Kabul to State, "First Reactions to Abdullah's Announcement: Relief" (2 November 2009).
18. HQ ISAF, "Commander's Initial Assessment" (30 August 2009).
19. Wikileaks message US Embassy Kabul to State, "Afghan Minister of Defense: I Support McChrystal's Way Ahead" (8 October 2009).
20. These varying opinions, from Eikenberry, Clinton, Biden and others in the Obama Administration, are summed up in David E. Sanger's *Confront and Conceal* (New York: Crown/Archetype, 2012), pages 30–35. These views are echoed in Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2010), pages 257–263.
21. Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, page 290.
22. *Ibid.*, chapters 27 to 29.
23. JTF-A HQ DSR (6 September 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (11 September 2009).
24. JTF-A HQ WSR (25 September–1 October 2009).
25. JTF-A HQ DSRs (11–14 September 2009).
26. JTF-A HQ WSR (25 September–1 October 2009).
27. JTF-A HQ DSR (6 October 2009).
28. JTF-A HQ WSR (2–8 October 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (9–15 October 2009).
29. J2 briefing to the author (KAF, 11 July 2010).
30. JTF-A HQ DSR (12 October 2009).
31. JTF-A HQ DSR (10 October 2009).
32. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 October 2009).
33. This was the sense of the CHOPs, LCol Mike Patrick and others, in the fall of 2009. See Patrick interview.
34. Email LCol Jean-Francois Cauden to Sean Maloney (22 April 2013).
35. *Ibid*.
36. Telephone interview LCol Jean-Francois Cauden (19 March 2012). See also follow-up email Cauden to Maloney.
37. Cauden interview.
38. Email Cauden to Maloney.
39. Distilled from OCC-P and PRT DSRs (August and September 2009).
40. JTF-A HQ DSR (26 August 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (27 August 2009).
41. Hameed Zalmal, "Bomb kills 36 in Afghanistan's Kandahar: Officials" (Agence France-Presse, 26 August 2009). See http://news.smh.com.au/.

42. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 September 2009).
43. Confidential discussions with Canadian personnel.
44. JTF-A HQ WSR (4–10 September 2009).
45. JTF-A HQ DSR (8 September 2009).
46. PRT DSRs (6 and 7 October 2009).
47. OCC-P DSR (16 August 2009).
48. JTF-A HQ WSR (18–24 September 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (25 September–1 October 2009). For comparison, the Americans deployed an MP battalion of five companies (500 all ranks) to handle security in the city of Baghdad in 2003–2004. See Mark R. Depue, *Patrolling Baghdad: A Military Police Company and the War in Iraq* (University Press of Kansas, 2007).
49. PRT DSR (27 September 2009).
50. PRT DSR (11 October 2009).
51. PRT DSR (20 October 2009).
52. JTF-A HQ DSR (29 September 2009).
53. JTF-A HQ DSR (25 September 2009).
54. PRT DSR (29 September 2009).
55. OCC-P DSR (30 September 2009).
56. PRT DSR (10 October 2009).
57. PRT DSR (14 October 2009).
58. Of course, certain Canadians had established informal links with the Kandahar Ulema Shura as early as 2006, but this did not constitute systematic religious engagement.
59. JTF-A HQ DSR (9 October 2009).
60. PRT DSR (12 October 2009).
61. Derived from JTF-A HQ DSRs (August, September, and October 2009).
62. Battle group DSR (26 August 2009).
63. JTF-A HQ WSR (25 September-1 October 2009).
64. Telephone interview with LCol Mike Gilmore (15 October 2012).
65. OMLT DSR (17 August 2009).
66. JTF-A HQ DSRs (13–20 September 2009).
67. JTF-A HQ DSRs (23, 24, 25, 30 September 2009).
68. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 October 2009).
69. PRT DSR (8 September 2009).
70. PRT DSR (14 September 2009).
71. JTF-A HQ DSR (12 October 2009).
72. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 October 2009); PRT DSR (22 October 2009).

73. JTF-A HQ DSR (16 October 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (18 October 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (20 October 2009).
74. Gilmore interview.
75. JTF-A HQ DSR (23 October 2009).
76. JTF-A HQ DSR (28 October 2009).
77. JTF-A HQ DSR (3 November 2009).
78. JTF-A HQ DSR (4 November 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (10 November 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (12 November 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (23–29 October 2009).
79. JTF-A HQ WSR (21–27 August 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (28 August–3 September 2009).
80. *Ibid*. JTF-A HQ WSR (25 September–1 October 2009).
81. JTF-A HQ WSR (25 September–1 October 2009).
82. JTF-A HQ DSR (4 October 2009).
83. PRT DSR (1 October 2009).
84. PRT DSR (6 October 2009).
85. JTF-A HQ WSR (2–8 October 2009).
86. Briefing, "OMLT 1-09 Roto 7."
87. JTF-A HQ WSR (9–15 October 2009).
88. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 October 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (10 October 2009).
89. JTF-A HQ WSR (16–22 October 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (23–29 October 2009).
90. JTF-A HQ DSR (3 October 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (7 October 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (8 October 2009); JTF-A HQ DSRs (10–12 October 2009).
91. Discussions between District Leader Nazek and the author (27 January 2008).
92. PRT DSR (27 October 2009).
93. PRT DSR (1 November 2009).
94. Cauden interview.
95. *Ibid*.
96. Derived from JTF-A HQ WSRs for the September-November 2009 period.
97. JTF-A HQ WSR (30 October–5 November 2009).
98. JTF-A HQ DSR (7 August 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (10 August 2009).
99. Dan McCue, "Cold-Blooded Scam Alleged in Afghanistan" (1 June 2011); Courthouse News Service, www.courthousenews.com/2011/06/01/36993.htm; CENTCOM Press Release, "CENTCOM Suspends U.S. Contractor Amid Non-Payment Allegation" (5 January 2011).
100. JTF-A HQ DSR (13 August 2009).
101. JTF-A HQ DSR (6 September 2009).
102. Battle group DSR (13 September 2009).
103. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 September 2009).

104. SIGACT Report, “BG CS 31 Struck an IED” (16 September 2009).
105. JTF-A HQ DSR (14 September 2009).
106. Battle group DSR (6 September 2009).
107. JTF-A HQ DSR (21 September 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (28 September 2009).
108. PRT DSR (30 September 2009).
109. PRT DSR (1 October 2009).
110. PRT DSR (13 October 2009).
111. JTF-A HQ WSR (11–18 September 2009).
112. Interview with Col Jocelyn Paul (Kingston, 20 July 2012).
113. Battle group DSR (6 September 2009).
114. SIGACT report, “BG 9TAC Struck an IED” (7 September 2009).
115. JTF-A HQ DSR (3 September 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (8 September 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (26 September 2009).
116. SIGACT report, “BGCS 12 Struck an IED” (13 September 2009).
117. JTF-A HQ DSR (26 September 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (4 October 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (6 October 2009).
118. Paul interview.
119. *Ibid*.
120. *Ibid*.
121. 1 PPCLI War Diary (15–31 October 2009).
122. Interview with Maj Lee Mossop (Edmonton, 9 July 2012).
123. JTF-A HQ WSR (9–15 October 2009).
124. Interview with LCol Ryan Jurkowski (Kingston, 19 June 2014).
125. *Ibid*.
126. *Ibid*.
127. *Ibid*.
128. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (15–25 October 2009).
129. *Ibid*.
130. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 November 2009).
131. Jurkowski interview.
132. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (25–30 October 2009).
133. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 November 2009).
134. Jurkowski interview.
135. JTF-A HQ DSR (1 November 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (3 November 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (6 November 2009). Interview with Maj Wayne Niven (Edmonton, 11 July 2012).
136. Niven interview. See also 1 PPCLI “Operation HYDRA POR.” See Jurkowski interview.

137. JTF-A HQ WSR (27 November-3 December 2009).

138. JTF-A HQ DSR (7 December 2009).

139. 1 PPCLI BG briefing, "Nakhonay Back Brief" (15 January 2010).

140. *Ibid*.

141. Niven interview.

142. *Ibid*.

143. IDLG briefing, "District Delivery Program" (10 March 2010). See also Robert Kemp, "The District Delivery Program in Afghanistan: A Case Study in Organizational Challenges," http://smallwarsjournal.com (26 June 2012).

144. Robert Kemp, "The District Delivery Program in Afghanistan: A Case Study in Organizational Challenges," http://smallwarsjournal.com (26 June 2012). See also The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, "District Councils: The Missing Middle of Local Governance" (27 June 2011).

145. United Nations Development Programme, "National Area Based Development Programme: First Quarter Progress Reports 2012" (11 January 2011), pages 3 and 7. UK in Afghanistan, "Governance and Rule of Law," http://ukinafghanistan.fco.gov.uk; Colin Cookman and Caroline Wadhams, "Governance in Afghanistan: Looking Ahead to What We Leave Behind," Center for American Progress, https://www.americanprogress.org/ (May 2010).

146. HQ ISAF Force Reintegration Cell, "A Guide to the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Process (APRP)" (March 10). See also USAID Fact Sheet, "Afghan Social Outreach Programme" (June 2011).

147. Robert Hulslander and Jake Spivey, "Village Stability Operations and Afghan Local Police," *Prism* 3 No. 3, pages 125–138. For an overview of the development of the Afghan Local Police programs, see Human Rights Watch report, "Just Don't Call It a Militia: Impunity, Militias, and the Afghan Local Police" (2011).

148. The author travelled to Wardak Province to assess the Afghan Public Protection Program (AP3) in 2009 for JTF-A HQ and was involved in discussions over these programs. AP3 was essentially a test of what would become the ALP.

149. Briefing, "OMLT 1-09 Roto 7."

150. OMLT DSR (17 September 2009).

151. OMLT DSR (7 October 2009).

152. OMLT DSR (20 September 2009).

153. OMLT DSR (28 September 2009).

154. JTF-A HQ WSR (28 August-3 September 2009).

155. JTF-A HQ WSR (4–10 September 2009).

156. *Ibid*.

157. OMLT Briefing to HQ (5–10, and 30 April 2010).

158. Interview with BGen Shane Brennan (Ottawa, 23 October 2012).

159. Brennan interview.

160. *Ibid*.

161. Discussions with OMLT personnel.

162. Brennan interview.

163. Interview with LCol Joe Pospolita (KAF, 12 July 2010).

164. Pospolita interview.

165. JTF-A HQ DSR (16 May 2009).

166. *Ibid*.; JTF-A HQ DSR (16 May 2009).

167. Interview with LCol Carl Turenne (Kingston, 15 April 2010).

168. Interview with Capt Darcy Heddon (Ottawa, 25 October 2012).

169. *Ibid*.

170. Telephone interview with LCol Lee Hammond (10 July 2012).

171. JTF-A HQ WSR (11–18 September 2009).

172. Turenne interview; PRT briefing, "Arghandab Valley Integrated Development Vision July 2009"; JTF-A HQ WSR (4–10 September 2009).

173. DSR (4 September 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (6 September 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (7 September 2009).

174. JTF-A HQ WSR (18–24 September 2009).

175. One example of the juvenile nature of these personality problems involved a Canadian officer being told by a CIDA employee that she did not feel comfortable coming to a PRT conference "because there would be a whole bunch of army guys there." When asked why, the CIDA employee said she was uncomfortable because they "killed people." Confidential interview.

176. Sean D. Naylor, "Stryker Soldiers Say Commanders Failed Them," *Army Times* (21 December 2009); Adam Ashton, "Stryker Brigade Commander Nearly Lost His Job," *Seattle Times* (16 October 2011).

177. IJC was a necessary operational-level headquarters between HQ ISAF and the regional commands, as identified in 2008–2009 during the rethinking of the U.S. and NATO efforts in Afghanistan. This mirrored a similar construct in Iraq. IJC is responsible for the campaign in Afghanistan, essentially leaving the international relations and ministerial level relations to HQ ISAF. IJC is roughly the equivalent of a corps command, its commander being a three-star general, and its structure derived from a standing NATO or U.S. corps command. But its responsibilities do not conform to the traditional corps role.

178. COMISAF Partnering Directive (29 August 2009).

179. JTF-A HQ WSR (6–12 November 2009).

180. Gen Stanley McChrystal, *My Share of the Task* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013), pages 363–369.

181. Interview with MGen Jon Vance (Ottawa, 11 December 2012).

182. Telephone interview with Col (Ret) Dan Ménard (6 November 2012).

183. JTF-A HQ WSRs (6–12, and 13–19 November 2009).

184. Interview with Col Simon Hetherington aboard a CC-130 in transit from Minhad to KAF (9 July 2010).

185. JTF-A HQ J3 Briefing to the author (KAF, 15 July 2010).

186. Letter Ménard to distribution list, "Concept of Operations for TF Kandahar December 2009–December 2010" (12 December 2009).

187. *Ibid*.

188. Interview with LCol Craig Dalton and Col Simon Hetherington (KAF, 10 July 2010).

189. JTF-A HQ J3 Briefing to the author (KAF, 15 July 2010).

190. JTF-A HQ J5 Briefing to the author (KAF, 15 July 2010).
191. JTF-A HQ J3 Briefing to the author (KAF, 15 July 2010).
192. Ménard interview; Dalton and Hetherington interview.
193. The Green Zone was the heavily protected American and coalition command district in Baghdad that became a comfortable Western community infused with group-think and disconnected from the Iraqi population over which it ostensibly ruled.
194. Dalton and Hetherington interview.
195. Confidential interview.
196. Dalton and Hetherington interview.
197. Ménard interview.
198. Interview with Maj Josh Major (KAF, 15 July 2010).
199. Ménard interview.
200. Interview with Maj Josh Major (KAF, 15 July 2010).
201. Interview with LCol J.S.S.D. Fortier (KAF, 15 July 2010).
202. Interview with LCol Jennie Carignan (KAF, 12 July 2010).
203. Interview with Maj Michael Wright (KAF, 15 July 2010). See also JTF-A HQ J5 briefing to the author (KAF, 15 July 2010).
204. Turenne interviews.
205. Ménard interview.
206. Hetherington interview. Note also that the author was brought in to assist the Ménard HQ while it was working up for its deployment in 2009 and noted the atmosphere at the time.
207. Turenne interview.
208. Confidential interview.
209. Ménard interview.
210. Fortin interview.
211. Hetherington interview.
212. WikiLeaks message, Embassy Kabul to State, "Operation MOSHTARAK: Moving to Governance Phase" (25 February 2010).
213. Turenne interview.
214. Ménard interview.
215. Pospolita interview.
216. *Ibid*.
217. Discussions with Maj Lisa Elliott (15 October 2012).
218. Pospolita interview.
219. Interview with Col Ian Creighton (Ottawa, 21 November 2012).

220. HQ ISAF to distribution list, "Partnering Directive." Located at www.publicintelligence.net (29 August 2009).
221. *Ibid*.
222. Sanger, *Confront and Conceal*, page 35; Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, pages 229, 291, 353.
223. NATO Parliamentary Assembly 2010 Annual Session, Warsaw: "Preparing the Afghan National Security Forces for Transition."
224. NATO ISAF Backgrounder, "Transition and ISAF Partnering" (December 2009).
225. Ménard interview.
226. Interview with BGen Shane Brenan (Ottawa, 23 October 2012).
227. Mossop interview.
228. Briefing deck, "Road to War 2008–2010 — Recce Squadron Current Ops Lessons Learned" (n/d).
229. Telephone interview with Maj Mark Popov (14 March 2013).
230. *Ibid*.
231. *Ibid*.
232. *Ibid*.
233. *Ibid*.
234. *Ibid*.
235. *Ibid*.
236. *Ibid*.
237. "OC Recce Sqn Handover Notes-TF 3-09 to TF 1-10" (6 May 2010).
238. Popov interview; Briefing deck, "Road to War 2008–2010 — Recce Squadron Current Ops Lessons Learned" (n/d).
239. Recce Squadron Briefing slide, "Four Key Messages" (n/d).
240. Email Popov to the author (17 March 2013).
241. *Ibid*.
242. Recce Squadron "Operation SALADIN" (28 February 2010).
243. Popov interview.
244. JTF-A HQ WSR (27 November-3 December 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (11–17 December 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (18–24 December 2009).
245. Jurkowski interview.
246. JTF-A HQ WSR (4–10 December 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (11–17 December 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (18–24 December 2009).
247. 1 PPCLI, "Operation TOFAN 24–31 December 2009 POR."
248. JTF-A HQ WSR (4–10 December 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (11–17 December 2009); JTF-A HQ WSR (18–24 December 2009).
249. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 December 2009); JTF-A HQ DSR (7 December 2010).
250. Email by Capt Whit Tyerman to the author via Maj Darcy Wright (May 2013).
251. JTF-A HQ WSR (18-24 December 2009).

252. JTF-A HQ DSR (16 December 2009).
253. JTF-A HQ WSR (11–17 December 2009).
254. JTF-A HQ DSR (21 December 2009).
255. JTF-A HQ WSR (13–19 November 2009).
256. JTF-A HQ WSR (11–17 December 2009).
257. JTF-A HQ WSR (18–24 December 2009).
258. DSR (31 December 2009); TFK INTSUM (31 December 2010).
259. Air Wing briefing to the author (KAF, 28 July 2010).
260. "What the Hell is Going on in the Arghandab River Valley?" Ink Spots, http://tachesdhuile.blogspot.ca (27 January 2010).
261. TFK Command O Group (14 March 2010).
262. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (January 2010).
263. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 January 2010).
264. JTF-A HQ DSRs (12, 13 and 15 January 2010).
265. JTF-A HQ DSRs (20 and 21 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (16 February 2010).
266. JTF-A HQ DSR (28 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (4 February 2010).
267. JTF-A HQ DSRs (10 and 11 February 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (20–26 January 2010).
268. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (February 2010).
269. JTF-A HQ WSR (3–9 February 2010).
270. 1 PPCLI, "Op OTASH POR 10–14 January 2010."
271. *Ibid*.
272. Mossop interview.
273. JTF-A HQ DSR (19 January 2010).
274. In 2009, the title of District Leader was changed to District Governor.
275. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs and WSRs (January–February 2010).
276. JTF-A HQ DSR (3 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (10 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (20 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (21 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (7 February 2010).
277. JTF-A HQ DSR (8 February 2010).
278. JTF-A HQ DSR (7 January 2010).
279. JTF-A HQ DSR (23 February 2010).
280. JTF-A HQ DSR (7 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (10 January 2010); (JTF-A HQ DSR 11 January 2010);
281. JTF-A HQ DSR (17 January 2010).
282. 1 PPCLI, "Roto 8 End Tour Briefing" (3 May 2010). See also JTF- A HQ DSR (2 January 2010).
283. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (31 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (2 February 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (12 February 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (17 February 2010).

284. DST and OCC-D (P) briefings to the author, New District Centre, Panjwayi OCC-D(P) (7 August 2010).

285. *Ibid*.

286. *Ibid*.

287. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (10 January 2010).

288. TFK INTSUM (9 January 2010); TFK INTSUM (10 January 2010).

289. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 January 2010).

290. JTF-A HQ DSR (17 January 2010).

291. Niven interview.

292. *Ibid*.

293. *Ibid*.

294. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (25 January 2010).

295. JTF-A HQ DSR (27 January 2010).

296. TFK INTSUM (18 January 2010); TFK INTSUM (31 January 2010).

297. JTF-A HQ DSR (3 February 2010).

298. 1 PPCLI "Operation SHER POR" (3–4 February 2010); TFK INTSUM (8 February 2010); TFK INTSUM (15 February 2010).

299. JTF-A HQ DSR (10 February 2010).

300. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 February 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (16 February 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (18 February 2010).

301. JTF-A HQ DSR (28 February 2010).

302. TFK INTSUM (28 February 2010).

303. JTF-A HQ DSR (21 February 2010).

304. Briefing to the author (Camp Nathan Smith, 17 July 2010).

305. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (January and February 2010); Briefing to the author (Camp Nathan Smith, 17 July 2010).

306. JTF-A HQ WSR (6–12 January 2010).

307. JTF-A HQ DSRs (8–9 January 2010).

308. JTF-A HQ DSR (17 January 2010).

309. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (22–28 January 2010).

310. JTF-A HQ DSR (26 January 2010).

311. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 February 2010). Subsequent discussion suggested that it may have been commercially motivated in that one of the dead men, Haji Mohammad, a bodyguard and "close associate", was involved in land issues related to the removal of Governor Raufi in 2008. See JTF-A HQ WSR (3–9 February 2010).

312. JTF-A HQ DSR (15 February 2010).

313. JTF-A HQ DSR (20 February 2010).

314. JTF-A HQ DSRs (27 and 28 February 2010).

315. JTF-A HQ WSR (17–23 February 2010).

316. JTF-A HQ WSR (27 November–3 December 2009).

317. Distilled from JTF-A HQ weekly reporting (December 2009 to February 2010).

318. JTF-A HQ DSRs (10–16 February 2010).

319. JTF-A HQ DSR (6 January 2010).

320. JTF-A HQ DSRs (25 December 2009–5 January 2010).

321. JTF-A HQ WSR (6–12 January 2010).

322. TFK INTSUM (21 May 2010).

323. JTF-A HQ WSR (4–10 December 2009).

324. Distilled from JTF-A WSRs (January and February 2010).

325. JTF-A HQ DSR (17 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (18 January 2010).

326. JTF-A HQ DSR (10 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (12 January 2010).

327. JTF-HQ DSR (17 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (23 January 2010). See also Tony Foster, "New Program Employs Afghan Youth", http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/commun/ml-fe/article-eng.asp?id=5991

328. JTF-A HQ DSRs and WSRs (25 December 2009–14 January 2010).

329. JTF-A HQ DSR (4 February 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (27 January–2 February 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (10–16 February 2010).

330. JTF-A HQ DSR (23 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (27 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (8 January 2010).

331. JTF-A HQ DSR (25 January 2010).

332. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (12 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (15 January 2010).

333. JTF-A HQ DSR (3 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (4 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (5 January 2010), JTF-A HQ DSR (26 January 2010).

334. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 February 2010).

335. JTF-A HQ WSR (17–23 February 2010).

336. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 January 2010).

337. JTF-A HQ DSR (19 February 2010).

338. JTF-A HQ WSR (25 December–5 January 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (6–12 January 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (20–26 January 2010).

339. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (14 February 2010).

340. JTF-A HQ WSR (20–26 January 2010).

341. Distilled from WSRs (January and February 2010). See also JTF-A HQ DSR (31 January 2010).

342. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs and WSRs (January and February 2010).

343. Interview with Col Christian Drouin (KAF, 28 July 2010).

344. Why Canada could not or would not deploy SAR techs and their CH-149 Cormorant helicopters to handle MEDEVAC remains open for speculation.

345. Air Wing briefing to the author (KAF, 28 July 2010).

346. Telephone interview with Col Christian Drouin (1 March 2013); Air Wing briefing to the author (KAF, 28 July 2010).

347. Drouin telephone interview.

348. *Ibid*.

349. Air Wing briefing to the author.

350. Drouin telephone interview.

351. Air Wing briefing to the author.

352. This was not necessarily new in the sense that IR strobes had been used by special operations forces since at least the early 1990s. This is depicted in the film "Blackhawk Down."

353. Air Wing briefing to the author.

354. Interview with LCol Jim Jensen (Kingston, 28 February 2013).

355. Jensen interview.

356. *Ibid*.

357. *Ibid*.

358. *Ibid*.

359. *Ibid*.

360. *Ibid*.

361. *Ibid*.

362. *Ibid*.

363. Michael Hastings, *The Operators: The Wild and Terrifying Inside Story of America's War in Afghanistan* (Plume, 2012), chapter 32. See also McChrystal My Share of the Task, pages 322–326.

364. See Theo Farrell, "Appraising MOSHTARAK: The Campaign in Nad-e Ali District, Helmand," Royal United Services Institute Briefing Note, www.rusi.org.

365. TFK O group briefing (2 February 2010).

366. JTF-A HQ DSR (19 January 2010); JTF-A HQ POSM (7 January 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (6–12 January 2010).

367. Mossop interview.

368. ISAF Joint Command Afghanistan News Release, "Operation MOSHTARAK" (13 February 2010).

369. Hastings, *The Operators*, chapter 32. McChrystal depicts the indecision resulting from Karzai's unfamiliarity with authorising operations. McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, chapter 20.

370. Interview with LCol Jeff Smyth (Kingston, 21 March 2013).

371. Smyth interview.

372. *Ibid*.

373. *Ibid*.

374. Brennan interview.

375. *Ibid*.

376. Jensen interview.

377. See Astri Suhrke, *When More is Less: The International Project in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), pages 63–66; Frank Lewidge, *Losing Small Wars: British Military Failure in Iraq and Afghanistan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), pages 215–217.

378. Suhrke, *When More is Less*, pages 63–66.

379. WikiLeaks message, American Embassy Kabul to State, "Nad Ali/Marjah Operation: Stabilization Planning" (7 February 2010).

380. WikiLeaks message, American Embassy Kabul to State, "Full Support by Local Shura for Operation MOSHTARAK" (13 February 2010).

381. WikiLeaks message, American Embassy Kabul to State, "Operation MOSHTARAK Moving to Governance Phase" (25 February 2010).

382. Confidential interview.

383. Ali K. Chishti, "Mullah Baradar Released?" *Daily Times* (16 October 2010), http://www.dailytimes.com.pk.

384. See Waliullah Rahmani, "Mullah Baradar's Capture and the Future of the Afghan Insurgency," Kabul Center for Strategic Studies, http://kabulcenter.org/. See also Abubakar Siddique, "Mystery of Taliban Leader's Capture Deepens," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (17 February 2010), http://www.rferl.org/content/Mystery_Of_Taliban_Military_Leaders_Capture_Deepens/1961093.html#hash=relatedInfoContainer.

385. Joshua Partlow and Karen De Young, "Afghan Officials say Pakistan's Arrest of Taliban Leader Threatens Peace Talks," *The Washington Post* (10 April 2010), http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/09/AR2010040904807.html.

386. Kamran Yousaf, "Afghan Reconciliation: Pakistan May Release Former Head of Quetta Shura," *The Express Tribune* (8 August 2012), http://tribune.com.pk/story/419044/afghan-reconciliation-pakistan-may-release-former-chief-of-quetta-shura/; Reuters, "Afghanistan's Peace Hopes May Rest with Mullah Baradar," http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/national/23-Aug-2012/afghanistan-s-peace-hopes-rest-on-mullah-baradar. See also Ashley J. Tellis, "Baradar, Pakistan, and the Afghan Taliban: What Gives?" Carnegie Endowment for Peace, *Policy Outlook* (March 2010).

387. Message, American Embassy Islamabad, "GOP denies Agreement to Transfer Baradar to Afghanistan, Lahore High Court Intervenes" (26 February 2010).

388. Dean Nelson and Ben Farmer, "Hamid Karzai Held Secret Talks with Mullah Baradar in Afghanistan," *The Telegraph* (16 March 2010).

389. Ménard telephone interview (6 November 2012).

390. Patricia Zengerle, "White House Hails Capture of Taliban Leader," Reuters, http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/02/17/us-afghanistan-obama-idUSTRE61G5DE20100217; confidential interview.

391. These characterizations were compiled by the author based on numerous conversations with Afghans and Canadians involved in Afghan politics between 2005 and 2011.

392. Confidential interviews. See also WikiLeaks message, American Embassy Kabul to State, "Kandahar Politics Complicate U.S. Objectives in Afghanistan" (6 December 2009); American Embassy Kabul to State, "Ahmed Wali Karzai and Governor Wesa on Governance in Kandahar" (3 November 2009); American Embassy Kabul to State, "Ahmed Wali Karzai: Seeking to Define Himself as U.S. Partner?" (25 February 2010).

393. Interview with Col Simon Hetherington (KAF, 9 July 2010).

394. Confidential interviews.

395. *Ibid*.

396. *Ibid*.

397. WikiLeaks message, American Embassy Islamabad, "GOP Demoes Agreement to Transfer Baradar to Afghanistan, Lahore High Court Intervenes" (26 February 2010).

LES AFFAIRES KANDAHAR:

MARCH–AUGUST 2010

The remainder of the Menard headquarters tour in 2010 was rocked by a series of public scandals that threatened to overshadow not only the work that the Canadian Army accomplished thus far in Afghanistan, but also the credibility of Canadian relations with the United States, and ultimately, ISAF itself. The scandals, not all of which were necessarily related or connected, opened up a gap that the enemy and others exploited to the fullest and threw coalition efforts into disarray well into the summer of 2010. The sequel to Operation MOSHTARAK in Kandahar province was delayed indefinitely and along with it promises to challenge power broker domination of the governance structures in that province. The insurgents and others clearly benefitted from this delay which gave space for the Taliban to adapt yet again to ISAF methodology. The centre piece of this shift in approach was the Kandahar assassination campaign of 2010.

Once the media got their teeth into the scandals, there was no letting go. Disciplinary issues and issues related to personal morality were permitted to trump news of cumulative progress on the ground. Throughout this time, the Karzai government and its representatives in Kandahar retained questionable legitimacy which in turn threatened the legitimacy of the upcoming provincial elections. There was less incentive for the population to side with the Afghan government and, as the scandals involving ISAF commanders progressed through the belly of the media snake, the population became less inclined to support ISAF generally. The personal behavior of certain commanders may have been acceptable in their home countries, but in Afghanistan moral outrage was easily generated in cultures that possessed different views on the sanctity of marital relations. In time the Canadian Army was forced to remove BGen Daniel Ménard from command and bring BGen Jon Vance back into the ring to stabilize the situation. All the while, of course, Canadian soldiers went about doing their hazardous jobs in the districts and in Kandahar City hoping for a better day, while the Taliban fighters licked the wounds inflicted on them in 2009.

Declining Confidence in Canada?

As we saw in Volume I, Combined Task Force AEGIS under BGen David Fraser laboured in the shadow of strained Canadian-American relations in the wake of the 2003 Iraq invasion decision. Canada had not fought a war since Korea in the 1950s and as such had little credibility with the larger American forces that provided critical enablers. After the events of 2006, and despite the highly professional efforts of Canadian soldiers in Kandahar and Helmand provinces, the level of credibility was nominal but not as high as some Canadians might like or think it to be. At the same time, the credibility of the U.S. Air Force was low with Canadians as a result of the 2002 Tarnak Farms and 2006 MEDUSA strikes, but had improved somewhat with the informal relations that afforded Canadian access to armed UAVs. As Canada assumed control of the Kandahar province area of operations into 2007 and the troop density relative to the Americans in the province was high, Canada could afford to be not overly concerned with what the Americans thought. And, after 2008, the United States placed an American battalion under Canadian command, which indicated that credibility levels were in fact higher than anticipated. Despite this, the U.S. Army, its leaders and troops were loathe to serve under any non-American command. That did not mean that they did not. That did not mean that they could not. On the whole, however, the superpower's legions did not like serving under non-citizens. Certain hyper-patriotic commentators in the American mediasphere did not like this state of affairs either.

Under normal circumstances, frictions between American subordinate units and Canadian formation commanders were dealt with at the command level. Usually, as we have seen with 2-2 Infantry, this was not an issue. The removal of a senior U.S. police mentor was another example. However, when the Ménard headquarters took over in November 2009, elements in 1-12 Infantry were apparently rubbed the wrong way after initial contact. The Ménard headquarters was new, did not have the same level of experience in the area of operations, and some 1-12 Infantry personalities took offence at being treated with what they perceived to be arrogant disregard. At the same time, the Vance headquarters had had to deal with a difference of opinion on rules of engagement and fire control with 1-12 Infantry before the Ménard headquarters arrived. Though that was ironed out at the time with McChrystal's assistance, this may have contributed to the follow-on breakdown in the relationship by establishing a level of distrust between the two organizations.[1]

Ménard's view was that 1-12 Infantry had problems similar to those the PRT were experiencing. Things had changed, 1-12 Infantry had been in place a long time, and was not interested in changing its modus operandi to conform to the new ways. Ménard recognized that Zharey was a problematic district from governance to policing, and he believed that 1-12 Infantry was structured more for centralized warfighting, that is, sortieing out from

FOB Wilson, rather than decentralized operations in the communities. The 1-12 Infantry commanding officer tried but was unable to really connect with district leader Sahardi, who likely was not interested in doing so anyway.[2]

The proliferation of media personnel accompanying the American influx in Kandahar produced conditions whereby discontent on the part of American personnel would be transmitted in some form into the public domain. At the very least, grumbling would be collected by media representatives over time until it built up and was released in a burst. Stryker Brigade commander Col Harry Tunnell, for example, reportedly complained that Canada lost control of Arghandab, misled him over the strength of enemy forces, and that he lost personnel killed and wounded as a result.[3] As we have seen in previous chapters, the situation was far more complicated than this but that was irrelevant in the mediaverse.

Adding to the series of confidence issues at this time was the problem of Task Force 2 Fury. Severe personality-based issues back in the United States related to its commanding officer LTC Frank Jenio and his parent brigade commander, Col Brian Drinkwine, undermined the public perception of functionality in that unit. TF 2 Fury was under the tactical command of TF Kandahar and was covering the vital Zharey-Arghandab 'seam'. Drinkwine's division commander fired Jenio in January 2010 for allegedly losing control of his troops, but by early February it was clear that there was much more to the story and the affair was a severe institutional embarrassment to the U.S. Army. Almost none of this was reported by elements of the American media in Kandahar: instead, they turned their sights on the Ménard headquarters.[4]

TF 2 Fury writhed from the combined pressures of an internal investigation, enemy action, and adverse media scrutiny. 1-12 Infantry had ongoing problems with the Ménard headquarters while Col Harry Tunnell's Stryker brigade units were taking significant casualties in Arghandab. It was at this point that the Tarnak Bridge incident occurred.

The situation in Daman District had been deteriorating throughout January and February. There were more and more rockets flung at Kandahar Air Field in early 2010 than throughout most of 2009. On 14 January a suicide bomber attacked the Daman District Centre. As a result of these attacks, the soldiers of the 97th MP Battalion increased their contacts with the Daman police and worked with them to improve their capabilities so they could respond to increased enemy activity. This included mounting joint patrols and establishing vehicle checkpoints, especially along the vital Highway 4 route to Kandahar City. Daman, however, was not experiencing anything remotely like the levels of violence in the districts west of the city and there were no additional resources available to deploy there in any event.[5]

On 1 March 2010 a suicide bomber detonated while he was stopped on the Tarnak Bridge awaiting inspection by Afghan police. The blast took out an American MRAP vehicle and killed Spc Ian T.D. Gelig of the 82nd Airborne, killed two Afghans, and wounded five other Afghan and American personnel. The RAF Regiment deployed a quick reaction force to evacuate the casualties and TF Kandahar pushed a UAV to monitor the situation. This was followed by a TF Kandahar engineer recce to assess the status of the bridge. It remained standing with one lane open. The industrious Afghans had already created their own bypass in the riverbed and traffic was moving again while ISAF assessment and remediation operations started immediately, led by TF Kandahar engineers. Hours later, a suicide bomber attacked Police Headquarters in Kandahar City, killing two and wounding sixteen. It was likely that the insurgent bomber at Tarnak Bridge panicked during the search process and prematurely detonated before he could reach his target inside Kandahar City.[6]

Photo Credit: Author

This is Tarnak Bridge on Highway 4, scene of a suicide IED attack that destroyed an American MRAP vehicle and put the bridge out of action. American media unfairly blamed TF Kandahar for not responding to the incident. In reality, the unit that was supposed to be covering this area of operations was an American one.

Although the details of the attack were first reported by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, American media leapt all over TF Kandahar and blamed Canada for the incident:

> Our combat soldiers should not be commanded from a country that is quitting the fight. The bridge fiasco on Monday underlines that fact. With our next big offensive set for Kandahar, command should be with British and American forces. Canada needs to step out of the way.[7]

And:

> We lost a soldier to a suicide bomb on a bridge just a short drive [from KAF] … Meanwhile on this bustling base, under-employed soldiers from various nations crowd around hockey games, live bands, and coffee shops. The damaged bridge is just a bicycle ride away from soldiers who are too busy celebrating Olympic medals to safeguard this bridge … The General in charge of this bridge should be fired.[8]

Mainstream American media, now focused on the Tarnak Bridge incident, assumed that TF Kandahar was the commanding formation for the area and connected the dots. In this negative climate BGen Ménard was blamed by American media for the 'loss of American troops' (it was a single soldier) because Canadians somehow couldn't 'control' Tarnak Bridge. The reality was that Tarnak Bridge lay on a 'seam' between 97th MP Battalion in Kandahar City, an area labeled "TFK/GDA" or TF Kandahar/Ground Defence Area, and more importantly, it was on the clearly-marked "TFS FOM" or the Task Force Stryker Freedom of Movement corridor along Highway 4 from Spin Boldak to Kandahar City. Commentators overlooked the fact that Afghan security forces had some responsibility for the Tarnak Bridge, having maintained security on it continuously since at least 2003.[9] The delineation of the TF Kandahar area of operations and the RAF Regiment-controlled Ground Defence Area around Kandahar Air Field had been ambiguous since 2007 and remained so in 2010.[10] The responsibility for freedom of movement on Highway 4 in the Ground Defence Area was formally transferred from TF Stryker to TF Kandahar on 1 April 2010.[11]

Truth and context did not matter, particularly the uncomfortable fact that this was enemy action and not necessarily negligence.[12] Likewise, no one cared that, by setting a firm date for withdrawing from Afghanistan, the Canadian government had opened itself up to criticism for leaving the fight by those who had just realized a fight was on. Canada's reputation was now severely damaged, and the Tarnak Bridge incident served to confirm rumours of serious problems in the Canada-United States command relationship in Kandahar. And so the stage was set for the Ménard affair later in the spring.

The Situation in Kandahar Province, March 2010

The Carter-led Regional Command (South) headquarters continued with the consolidation of its operational-level planning in the run-up to the summer while MOSHTARAK Phase I and II were underway in Helmand. Operation MOSHTARAK Phase III was, the TF Kandahar J5 believed, going to be a large operation mounted in June or July in Zharey, Panjwayi, and Arghandab districts. Regional Command (South) also took over the Kandahar City Security Plan and replaced the senior coalition representation on the Kandahar City Security Committee.[13] Planning for MOSHTARAK Phase III and its coordination with TF Kandahar continued throughout March and April.[14]

Meanwhile, TF Kandahar worked out a means to clarify what it thought the situation was in its area of influence. Using the 'Define-Shape-Clear-Hold-Build-Enable' construct as a measurement of progress or status, the staff broke down the districts into areas where they thought these criteria applied.[15]

Working west to east, the 'Horn of Panjwayi' was considered to be in a Define-Shape mode. Western Zharey was essentially abandoned and not even assessed. Maywand district, which had transitioned to Stryker Brigade long ago, was not tracked by TF Kandahar. The area between the 28 and 32 eastings in Zharey, was also considered to be Define-Shape. Sperwan Ghar in Panjwayi was in Shape mode. Bazaar-e Panjwayi was in Hold, and the area south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi was rated as Hold-Build. Senjaray in Zharey district was undergoing Clear, with southern Arghandab in Shape-Clear. Central Arghandab and the area east of the river was in Hold. Northern Arghandab was in Clear-Hold. To the south, western Panjwayi was in Build, while Dand was in Build-Enable. Nakhonay and points south were still Define-Shape. Kandahar City was rated as Build, while Daman was Build-Enable. There was some Define space northwest of Kandahar Air Field.[16] (see Figure 7-1)

There was, of course, the insurgents and what they wanted. TF Kandahar analysis was subjected to conflicting data on a series of upheavals in the Quetta Shura, some of which related to the capture of Mullah Barader. At some point in January the infamous Jabbar Agha expressed concern to the senior insurgency leadership that the loss of men and materials from August to January was high and might delay or even postpone summer offensive operations. He apparently recommended that, in order to retain the initiative, widespread use of IEDs and assassinations should be employed against all coalition and Afghan targets on a sustained basis.[17]

While this was under debate, the Taliban leadership had to deal with Operation MOSHTARAK in February. Again, there was conflicting and contradictory information. Some insurgent groups were redeployed from Kandahar province to confront MOSHTARAK in Helmand, while other groups were apparently withdrawn from the target areas and sent to Zharey and Panjwayi districts in Kandahar or they retreated there for refit.[18]

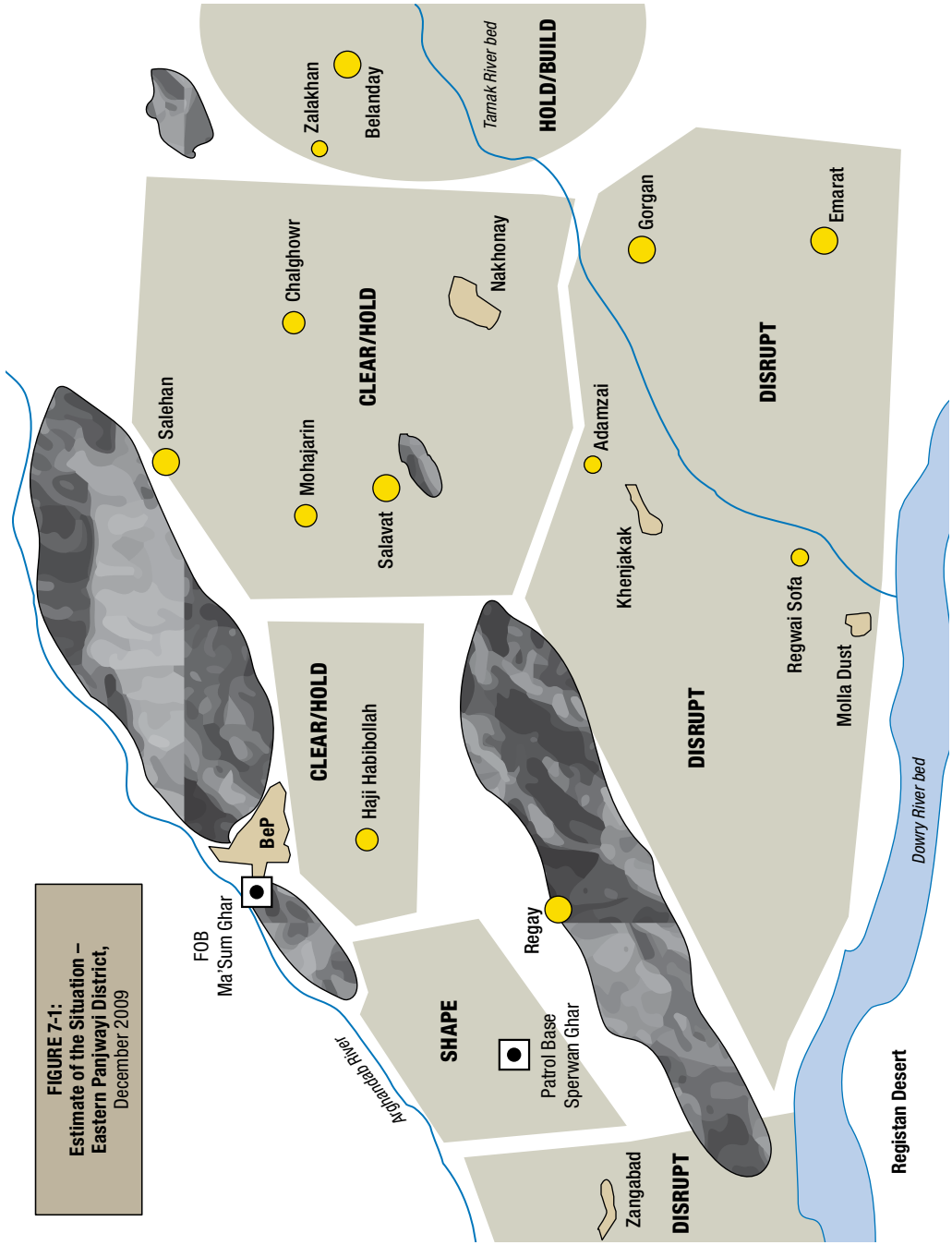

Figure 7-1: Estimate of the Situation – Eastern Panjwayi District, December 2009

At some point after Mullah Barader was taken, a large number of Taliban leaders from Kandahar met a large number of elders who supported the insurgency. Apparently, they believed that Mullah Omar was under some form of house arrest in Pakistan. Allegedly, Omar sent word to these leaders that operations should continue but schools, immunization, and reconstruction projects should be left alone. Debate ensued as to the future viability of the insurgency itself. Allegedly, the majority of the hard core Taliban fighters left alive after fighting Canadian forces since 2006, and this included the infamous Jabbar Agha, Mullah Zergay, Sadiq Agha, and 'Uncle' Kaka, considered the possibility that they might have to make peace. There were two hard core survivors that dissented and wanted to continue the fight: Mullah Sartar Akhund and Mullah Izzatullah. Others pointed out that Barader was the 'money man' and with his removal the summer offensive could not start. The proponents of continuing operations noted that the ISI would fund IEDs and assassinations, even if the traditional sources of funding were unavailable. There was a belief that the ISI would issue orders in the name of the Taliban leaders anyway if they did not initiate operations.[19]

A decision was made to continue operations in Kandahar Province, with the focus on Kandahar City. The Horn of Panjwayi would remain a defended area and serve as a base for training and infiltration of the city. (see Figure 7-2) City-based cells, which were independent of the Arghandab and Panjwayi-based groups, would increase their operational tempo. A new organization to handle systematic assassinations was to be created. And, behind the backs of loyal and effective leaders, men like Agha and Zergay, others quietly looked at replacing them with younger, more aggressive leaders. The mere questioning of the mission was assessed as tantamount to surrender.[20]

With a better eye into the topsy-turvy shadow world of insurgent politics in Pakistan, JTF Afghanistan even reported to Ottawa that it was the ISI pressuring the Taliban to cease operations because Operation MOSHTARAK was hampering the drug trade in Helmand.[21] Ultimately, however, it looked like the Taliban leadership in Pakistan was on the ropes and that they were now being pushed into actions that they were not necessarily comfortable with. Their centrality in the conflict in southern Afghanistan appeared to be diminishing as other entities threatened to bypass them to continue the violence for other purposes.

By early summer, even local fighters were questioning the Quetta Shura about its aims and leadership. That situation was significantly aggravated by the coalition's deliberate targeting of the mid-level command structures across Regional Command (South) but particularly in Kandahar. Another aggravating factor as time went on was the increased use of Waziris and other out-of-area fighters. That generated increased problems for local cells: these outsiders strained Pashtunwali hospitality to the limit and even indulged in acts of abuse. In other words, there were fissures in the enemy apparatus in Kandahar to exploit.[22]

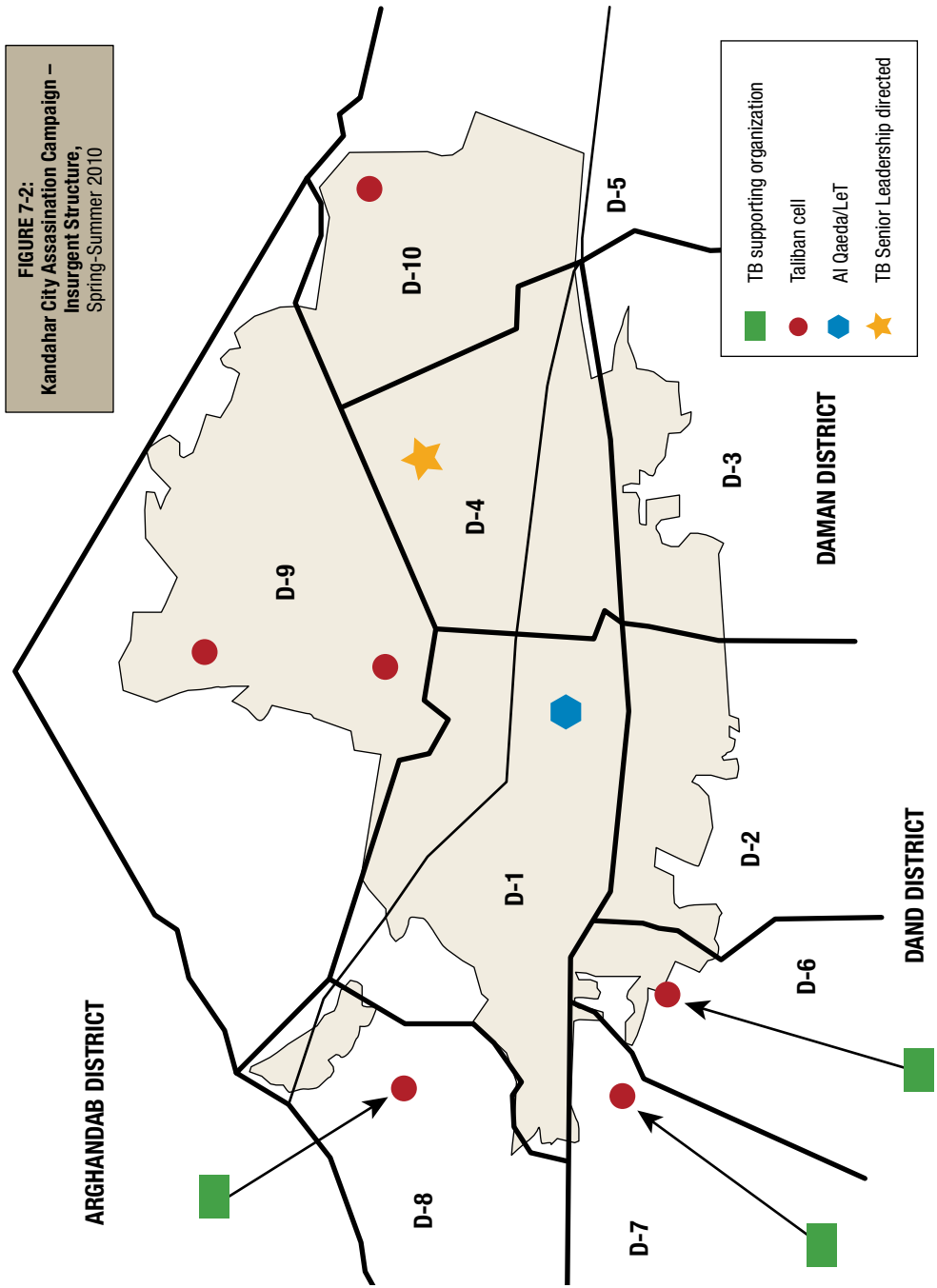

Figure 7-2: Kandahar City Assassination Campaign – Insurgent Structure, Spring-Summer 2010

The Kandahar City Assassination Campaign, March–April 2010

Urban terrorist operations picked up dramatically after the Babi assassination in late February. From January to February, there were four prominent assassinations and one attempt. In March, however, there was a spate of IED attacks followed by a wave of assassinations. Governor Wesa was informed that Mullah Omar and the Quetta Shura issued a fatwa against government employees. Almost everybody working for the provincial government received a 'night letter' or some other form of explicit intimidation. These came through relatives' cell phone calls and even cell phone text. Wesa believed that this was a response against plans to register all madrassas and mosques. In his view "the insurgents are not happy with this initiative as it impedes on their ability to freely use Madrassas as a forum to preach their message."[23]

The ASIC intelligence analysts were, however, not drawn into assuming that all violence in Kandahar City was insurgent violence, and to their credit parsed out those incidents that were suspicious. For example, on 2 March a bomb attack on Afghan police headquarters in Kandahar killed two and wounded sixteen. Canadian assessments concluded that this was an attempt by Popalzai officers in the police force to discredit or even kill Gen Sardar Zazai, the provincial security chief. Ahmad Wali Karzai wanted Zazai out of the way because he recently initiated an investigation into land confiscations by Karzai associates. Ahmad Wali Karzai asked the President to remove Zazai, who then prevaricated on this undertaking. As it turned out the Afghan National Police Guard Force commander at the headquarters during the attack had previously been jailed in Sarposa prison, pardoned by Ahmad Wali Karzai, and reinstated as a police officer.[24]

Similarly, the deaths of six more Pakistani SAITA construction company personnel at the hands of a gunman on 5 March was also suspicious. And, as with other matters involving SAITA the analytical waters on this one were seriously muddied. This was the second time SAITA had been targeted in Kandahar City. Clearly some entity did not want the UNOPS road contractor conducting its work in Kandahar province. It was impossible to sort out whether this was commercial violence by another contractor, Taliban violence to get the road program in Dand to stop, whether it was a signal to the ISI by some entity to stop using SAITA for cover, or whether Lashkar-e Taiba was in town looking for another 'spectacular.'[25] The Canadian assessment was that "there is some evidence to suggest that the networks of Ahmad Wali Karzai and Gul Agha Sherzai may also be waging a gang-style war for control of Kandahar's political, land ownership, and financial future."[26]

The Afghan response was to continue with PAMIR surge operations, supported by Canadian and American units. There were three significant raids in early March which netted several IED caches and even one IED facilitator. Four other large IEDs were found using information gathered during PAMIR before they could be used.[27]

On 13 March, however, it became very clear that there was substantial coordinated Taliban urban terrorist activity. There was a warning that a facilitation cell connected to ISI was bringing in vehicles for SVBIED use, and there were reports of enemy commanders meeting somewhere in Malajat, but there was little specific actionable intelligence.[28] Later in the day, in the space of forty minutes, there were five IED detonations: a bicycle-borne IED blew up in the Al-Jidad Market; a vehicle-borne IED hit the Sarposa prison gate; another detonated at Afghan police headquarters; another bomb blew up with no specific target, and a motorcycle-borne IED blew up at the Red Mosque. The butcher's bill for 13 March was estimated to be 30 dead and 60 wounded.[29]

The Afghan security forces were still able to respond effectively despite the loss of the police communications system in the attack. Information came in regarding an IED cache, which was raided immediately. The prison was rapidly secured and there were no escapees. A follow-on attack by a gunman at the Red Mosque was thwarted.[30] The Canadian assessment was that this coordinated attack was conducted by Taliban cells but that they had been issued orders by the ISI posing as Taliban senior leadership. The possibility existed that this was done to force the start of the summer fighting season and possibly to undermine the nascent peace process.[31] Indeed, Canadian analysts learned that the Taliban commanders on the ground actually ceased further operations on 13 March because of the mounting civilian death toll and the possible negative effects on gaining popular support.[32]

From 17 March to 5 April, Afghan, Canadian, and American security forces working together in the city mounted three more iterations of Operation PAMIR. These netted a large cache east of the city but little else turned up.[33] The insurgents went to ground, and observed. Evidently, their backers in Pakistan liked what they saw and by early April no less than ten new cell commanders, one for each city district, were preparing to infiltrate and restart operations. More resources were pushed their way: none of the new leaders appeared to have any connection to the existing cells or commanders in districts peripheral to the city.[34]

In the new commanders' first operation, on 12 April, two suicide bombers attacked a National Directorate of Security safe house, wounding four agents and five children. The next day, an 18-year-old girl employed by a non-governmental agency was assassinated, and a suicide car bomber killed three and wounded 25 at a compound occupied by the aid organization Chemonics, a USAID implementing partner.[35]

The week of 20 April was particularly bad. A donkey-borne IED detonated killing three children: the target, who survived, was Haji Fazluddin Agha, President Karzai's campaign manager in Kandahar. The Deputy Mayor, Haji Azizullah Yaramal, was assassinated with two shots to the back of the head while praying in a mosque. Mohammad Hussain of the

Agriculture Cooperatives NGO was shot dead, as was Haji Abdul Haim, the brother of the provincial Human Rights Director. The day after the Haim assassination, another vehicle-borne IED struck the Afghan police headquarters.[36]

Operation PAMIR upshifted into Operation ATAL. Afghan troops flooded into the city, while other coalition forces were brought in to assist. PAMIR resulted in several large IED cache finds, but there was much more to follow. The pressure was now on and would not relent going into May. Unfortunately, the UN decided that the situation was too hot and put security dampers on its operations in Kandahar Province. The PRT was dismayed, as this "will impact the work of UN HABITAT in Kandahar City and other partners such as UNICEF."[37]

The pattern of enemy activity was interesting. One path was to target the security forces and the government by attacking symbols like Sarposa and the police headquarters. The other path was the insidious and deliberate intimidation of the vulnerable aid and development organizations. Both paths used assassination and IEDs but were conducted by seemingly different organizations. This was all in addition to the commercial violence that the Kandahar power structure was already engaged in.

It is fair to suggest that these circles of overlapping violence could not be effectively addressed by TF Kandahar while it was at the same time dealing with controlling three battalions or battle groups, each operating in its own complex environment west of the city. Indeed, there is every indication that the security belts envisioned by Operation WADANA WAL had limited influence on the enemy's ability to mount the kind of urban operations seen in March and April 2010, let alone influence the Kandahari power structure in its pursuits. The solution really lay in improving the Afghan security force's ability to take on urban terrorism and at the same time protect itself from the predations of the Kandahari power structure. TF Kandahar, as we will see, could assist in the first of these endeavors but not the second. The decision to relinquish vital influence tools at the provincial level by the task force commander, unfortunately, contributed to this state of affairs.

Dand District Operations, March–April 2010

The level of identifiable insurgent activity in Dand district was low in March and April which in turn permitted significant movement on the Hold and Build lines of operations. All of the necessary mechanisms were in play including the OCC-D, the District Development Assembly, and several Community Development Councils. District Governor Nazek had, for the most part, reached accommodation on the issues bothering him earlier in the year while CIMIC and the CMO continued to support the Afghan organizations.[38]

On the security side, there were the practical issues surrounding the incorporation of the Barakzai militia into the Dand police force. Here the P-OMLT played a key role, working with the district Chief of Police. The decision was made to hold until a future Focused Police District Development scheme with the Afghan National Civil Order Police could be worked out where the militia could be formally retrained as police. Police coordination with coalition forces in Dand was considered exceptional and in many cases the Afghan police in the district were conducting independent as well as partnered operations by March-April.[39] Another major change was the attitude of the Fatay Khan Security Company. Khan re-named it Kandahar Security, actively pursued registration of his men and weapons, and in effect 'went legit' without protest. He was rewarded with a contract to provide security for part of the UNOPS road project.[40]

On the development front, the CIMIC team assigned to Dand continued to monitor the development bodies and act as connective tissue to CIDA when possible. CIMIC still had to keep a close eye on the Community Development Councils but was wary about being dragged in as a broker if there were corruption allegations. By this time a Stabilization Officer from the PRT was back on site at the Dand District Centre working with Nazek, who for the most part was able get development back on track.[41] The Agriteam NGO and the Central Asian Development Group were now both active in the district with Nazek's concurrence. These programs involved livestock distribution, vocational training, and grain storage. AVIPA was active distributing seed, while the Culturally Structured Youth Employment Program continued to pay dividends. Again, this spoke to the relative stability of the situation in Dand.[42]

The big project rolling through Dand at this time was the UNOPS road. SAITA remained engaged as the primary contractor despite the casualties inflicted on it over the past eight months. The paving crews, however, were shunned by local stores who received night letters threatening them if they supported the workers. And then there was a cluster of sophisticated radio-controlled IED finds along the route as it progressed into Panjwayi. These were discovered before they could be used.[43]

Was the campaign against the road project conducted by insurgents in Nakhonay, who knew that IEDs are more difficult to plant on a paved road, and that the road would bring more ISAF and Afghan troops to the Nakhonay area? Or was it sabotage by construction or security contractors who had been shut out of the project? Was it both? The road project continued.

The only significant violence in during this period was the ambush of a police patrol near the Kandahar City limits, which claimed the life of a policeman, and the attempted assassination of the Malik of Angurian, Fazil Karam. Karam, on his way to pray, was shot twice by a motorcycle-borne assassination team. He survived to become a local hero of resistance.[44] There was, however, a lot of ISTAR reportage that indicated that the Malik of Teymurian was under observation by the insurgents and would be assassinated next. Additional security precautions were implemented to protect him.[45]

Fortunately during this time the insurgency in Dand was discombobulated on its own due to internal disciplinary issues. ISTAR reportage suggested that the Taliban shadow governor for Kandahar intervened between two commanders. Mullah Qasim, who was in charge of operations in Dand, was removed for failure to meet objectives as well as for killing a relative of the dynamic Taliban commander, Hafiz Majid. Qasim protested this but was disarmed and removed along with his fighters to Pakistan. A new commander to Dand, Haji Amir, replaced him. Amir now set out to re-build the Dand network.[46]

Throughout April, an American task force based on the 1st Squadron, 71st Cavalry Regiment, known as 1-71 Cavalry or Ghost Squadron, was preparing to take over Dand from the Canadians. Led by LTC John Paganini, 1-71 Cavalry was a 450-strong reconnaissance, surveillance and target-acquisition squadron of the 1st Brigade, 10th Mountain Division that had been trained to function as a Security Forces Advisory Team before deploying to Afghanistan.[47] Paganini's cavalry squadron flowed into the district and authority was transferred to them by the end of April.

Panjwayi District Operations March-April 2010

As before, Canadian and Afghan operations in Panjwayi district broke down into four areas: Sperwan Ghar, Bazaar-e Panjwayi, the central-eastern communities, and Nakhonay (see Figure 7-3). Main actions during this time included a complex engagement against an IED dig team that involved a strafing run from an F-16, followed by the tracking and killing of the insurgents by a Heron, a Predator, and a B-1B bomber. The following night a LAV III engaged another dig team with 25mm fire while a Heron tracked the injured insurgents. A patrol captured them the next morning in a compound.[48] C Company's interest in local leadership paid off as they learned that Pay-e Moluk's population was fence-sitting because it had no serious leadership and thus could not resist Taliban intimidation. They also were told that "most of the lower level insurgent fighters and IED emplacers are motivated simply by poverty." The intimidation extended into Sperwan, where the four schools in that community were closed and the local mullah and his wife were forced to teach children at their home.[49] When fighters showed up to 'shoot and scoot' against Afghan positions, 1 PPCLI snipers were brought in. On one occasion they vectored in a MQ-9 Reaper and killed an ambush party. The wounded were captured.

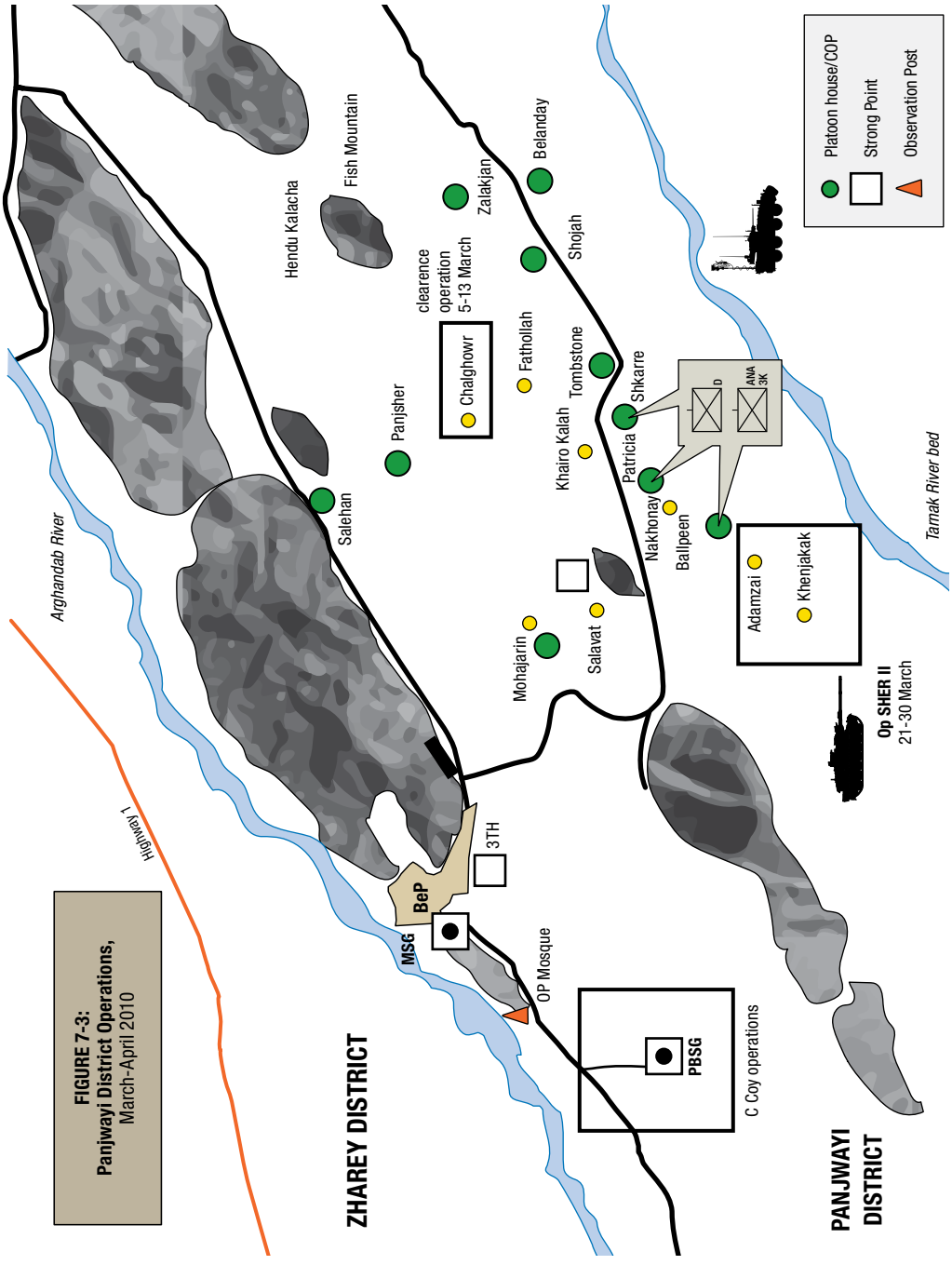

Figure 7-3: Panjwayi District Operations, March-April 2010

The situation remained relatively stable in the Sperwan area throughout March. That state of affairs encouraged productive shuras and the re-emergence of power broker Haji "Dollars" Agha Lalai of Sperwan, who had been lying low for the past year. Road projects associated with Route BROWN started up in April, and district governor Haji Baran started to take an interest in improving Route HYENA again. As project monies started to flow, information on IEDs started to come in. That in turn was followed by night-time intimidation by masked Taliban who brought with them lists of workers associated with road construction. The road crew leadership went to the CIMIC team and requested Canadian troops for protection "as they were the hardest working of the foreign soldiers."[50]

Sperwan was a good place for Canadians to pick up information about conditions in the Horn of Panjwayi and enemy-dominated areas of Zharey to the north, where residents were kept under stern control. People were allowed to use cellular telephones only inside their homes and in daytime, between 0530 and 1830 hours. A curfew was in place after 1600 hours, and violators were subject to immediate beating and two days of detention. An insurgent court handled all disputes, and offenders were beaten with canes. A two-percent tax was placed on raw opium, to be paid in product.[51] The existing Taliban control structure in the Horn was augmented in early April when the infamous Jabbar Agha arrived with 75 non-local fighters and set up a special court to handle internal Taliban discipline. Apparently Agha came into the picture because he was "upset at the insurgents for not doing enough for the jihad." Two other groups of 20 fighters each arrived soon afterwards.[52]

Jabbar Agha arrived around the time a series of SOF and police operations in Nakhonay and Bazaar-e Panjwayi directed against Panjwayi district Taliban leadership succeeded in temporarily disrupting the course of events. One of these targets was Mullah Izzatullah, the long-term and experienced commander who had fought against coalition forces for the past three years in Zharey and Panjwayi.[53]

Central-eastern Panjwayi started to heat up during this time. A Company and a company from 2nd Kandak cleared Chalghowr starting on 5 March. They were preceded by a series of SOF operations that netted three local commanders, moves which effectively shut down the Chalghowr insurgent support network and disrupted the ratline into Malajat that supported the Kandahar City assassination campaign. Jabbar Agha became convinced that a mid-level insurgent IED specialist connected to this cell was an informant and had him taken to Zangabad, tried by the Taliban court, and hanged.[54]

The Chalghowr clearance operation had a positive effect on neighbouring Salavat, where A Company reported improved atmospherics. The Chalghowr school opened up again and residents started identifying insurgents to the security forces. Mohajerin then asked for a school as well, once they saw the progress in Chalghowr. Elders then requested a permanent

security presence in Chalghowr. CIMIC and CMO started to look at projects there once it was clear that the community seriously considering their future.[55] The insurgency, now based out of Nakhonay, responded by shooting up the Panjsher outpost on 23 March and infiltrated an IED team into the Mohajerin area, where a Recce Squadron Coyote was struck in early April. The insurgency in that community was already seriously disrupted, with at least two suspected leaders on the run, but the enemy kept putting their people in to demonstrate they retained influence.[56]

It was increasingly evident that Nakhonay had become a crucial forward operating area for security forces and insurgents alike. West of Nakhonay was open ground all the way to the Khabari Ghar. The ratlines to Kandahar City and central eastern Panjwayi depended on the villages that extended southwest from Nakhonay and Khenjakak along the hills of the Adamzai Chain. Open terrain lay to the east into Dand so, if the insurgency was to continue operating in eastern Panjwayi, it had to maintain influence, if not control, in Nakhonay. This was increasingly clear to insurgent leaders in Zangabad, as D Company and 3rd Company from 2nd Kandak worked with their enablers to deepen the Hold in the community.

Photo Credit: Author

Known as the 'Festering Boil', the town of Nakhonay in eastern Panjwayi District was a node on the terrorist ratline into Kandahar City. In 2010, increased attention by Canadian and Afghan forces resulted in insurgent pushback, prompting an increased coalition presence.

A Company's OC, Maj Wayne Niven, wanted assistance on the governance front, a clinic and, possibly, a school, but the District Support Team kept its focus on mentoring District Governor Haji Baran, and its Canadian member "couldn't get clearance from Ottawa to come out." It took the kidnapping of the Haji Baba malik, who was taken to Zangabad and beaten into submission, to bring Baran to shuras in Nakhonay and Haji Baba. As for requests for a clinic, that was deferred to Kandahar City at the provincial level and nobody heard back from the Ministry of Health.

Major Niven decided to use Afghan army medics supported by Canadian Health Support Services in a village medical outreach-like operation but he "got more pushback from the Canadian medical dudes in KAF who were mentoring the local health care authorities, saying-and CIDA was pushing back hard too, saying 'You are trying to stand up something that is unsustainable'. And I'm like, 'Whoa, whoa, whoa. The only thing I want to do is get this thing so it doesn't have a hole in the roof and has windows.' My concept was getting the Kandak 2 doctor down there twice a month. Well, it wasn't a high enough priority."[57]

Photo Credit: Courtesy Maj Wayne Niven

Nakhonay was a nest of insurgent activity and a crucial waypoint on the ratline to Kandahar City. D Company troops sortie into the centre of town in an attempt to undermine enemy activities.

Niven was furious because he "couldn't get support from the PRT." The leader of the District Support Team told him to ignore the PRT and "Come to me, as the district stabilization guy in Panjwayi and I can pull on US funds to sort this out." Maj Niven "wasn't getting the support I needed from the people with Canadian flags on….we were cut off from everybody."[58]

Lt Col Baris thought health support was a good idea and sent his Afghan army medical people to Nakhonay, despite what the Canadian Health Support Services thought its priorities were, and the clinic was established. The question was this: was the Canadian Army's medical system in Kandahar supposed to respond to what it thought the civilian health department wanted, or was it supposed to support the Canadian Army while it was involved in partnered operations with Afghan troops? At what point were low-level medical operations an Other Government Department responsibility or an army responsibility? That was never completely resolved and illustrated yet another ambiguous area where positive low-level effects could be trumped by bureaucratic concerns. After all, if the Afghans wanted to do something in their own country, why did the Canadian military medical system believe it had a right to veto it on behalf of a nascent government department in Kandahar City?

The Afghan's pseudo-VMO contributed to positive changes in Nakhonay. Niven soon received a series of tips from locals regarding RPG and IED caches and these were recovered by Canadian and Afghan joint patrols. The new district chief of police took an active interest in what was going on and agreed to deploy fifteen policemen to Nakhonay. He expressed an interest in establishing a permanent police sub-station if he could get more trained police. A large shura with district and provincial authorities led to discussions over school construction and manning. The elders told the CIMIC team that security had improved and things were looking up for Nakhonay by mid-March.[59]

The spoiler was Haji Malim, malik of Nakhonay, who had been biding his time to see which way the wind was blowing. Chastised by an Afghan sergeant for cowardice because he was not helping his community, Malim sulked as projects continued. Canadian reports noted that "the local nationals no longer fear Malim and are willing to report insurgent activities." Villagers with access to Taliban leader Mullah Qasim "intend to convey to [him] that they no longer want insurgents in the area and will cease all support."[60]

The insurgent response was to kidnap a malik from Haji Baba, whisk him away to Zangabad through Kenjakak, beat him up, and return him to the community as an influence action to reduce local cooperation with CIMIC and CMO. A second elder who went to the Taliban to petition for his release was given the same treatment. A Canadian officer who dealt with the Haji Baba elder noted that "he was never really the same after that."[61]

1 PPCLI Battle Group and 2nd Kandak launched Operation SHER 2 on 25 March to clear the whole Adamzai Chain. The Strathcona tank squadron under Maj Rob Hume moved to cover Molla Dust at the bottom of the chain, with recce elements supporting the intermediary communities. D Company and 3rd Company roamed up and down the chain of communities for several days with the tanks and recce squadrons blocking and guarding as required. Canadian CH-47's and CH-146s conducted a surprise airmobile insertion with part of C Company near Kenjakak where they established vehicle checkpoints. In all cases, the population in these areas was categorized as neutral and insisted there were no insurgents present. There was no contact. No caches were discovered.[62]

D Company and 3rd Company returned to their framework patrols and projects continued as before. Security forces bagged an insurgent carrying radios, Icoms and antennas. Then the IEDs started again. A Canadian patrol hit a device, which seriously wounded one member. A large secondary device made from a 105mm round and a pair of mortar rounds was also unearthed. This was a novel development.[63] More IEDs continued to show up in the battlespace; on 11 April, Cpl Tyler Todd of D Company 1 PPCLI was killed by a fragmentation charge while on a foot patrol.

Two weeks later a large cache was uncovered based on a local tip. Other information followed and on 20 April D Company reported that three IED caches and three large weapons caches were seized in the Nakhonay-Haji Baba area. Haji Amir, the insurgent commander responsible for the area, was furious since this constituted the bulk of his weapons for the upcoming summer fighting season. Amir met with other insurgent leaders and fighters in an attempt to determine who was leaking information. They suspected the leak was within their own ranks and the hunt for the leak had disruptive effects on their operations.[64]

By the end of April, the Canadians and Afghans patrolling Nakhonay were augmented with fifteen policemen and information continued to flow in on caches and IEDs. Projects and medical assistance continued and the dialogue between the population and the security forces improved. This led to a better understanding of social dynamics in Nakhonay:

> [Local nationals] want CMO projects to proceed … [and] have expressed the view that if Haji Malim was removed from the situation it would allow for cooperation with [Canadian and Afghan] forces. There is support for the insurgents within Nakhonay however as in Haji Baba most fear there is no choice due to fear of reprisals … Malim pays lip service to the [security forces] while allowing the insurgents to operate behind the scenes. Additionally local nationals stated that Haji Malim had close ties with Panjwayi district leader Haji Baran … and that Baran requires insurgent ties to conduct business …[65]

The fact that Malim and Baran were both Noorzais was considered interesting by those studying the district political dynamics. Indeed, Baran was now increasingly besieged by the new realities of the District Support Team regime. Unable to handle the stress, he developed a medical issue and left the district for treatment. The sharks were circling, led by Haji Agha Lalai Dastagiri, his front man Fazil Mohommad, and all of the members of the Panjwayi shura who signed a petition for Baran's removal.

From Operation MOSHTARAK Phase III to HAMKARI, April–May 2010

As we have seen, the original plan was to have Operation MOSHTARAK Phase III transition to Kandahar province. As the situation developed, the Regional Command (South) planners and the TF Kandahar planners entered into a confusing dance on how all of this would play out. As of early March, the idea was that MOSHTARAK Phase III would have two stages: Stage I was a re-evaluation of the Kandahar City Security Plan and to apply pressure in Kabul to get Dand formally recognized as a district. Stage II was to "assert governmental authority" in Zharey and Arghandab districts coincident with the arrival of an American brigade in the summer.[66] By the end of March, this thinking shifted. Stage I remained the Kandahar City Security Plan and the insertion of an incoming American cavalry battalion into Dand, while Stage II was significantly altered to include "governance-led operations" in Zharey, Arghandab, and Panjwayi districts coincident with the arrival of the American brigade in Zharey and Arghandab. The PRT was instructed to have district stabilization plans prepared for those districts.[67]

The acceleration of the assassination campaign in Kandahar City was extremely serious: "The spoiling actions by the insurgents in Kandahar Province against government personnel and NGOs are a serious threat to ISAF objectives since they further separate the people from [the government]."[68] By mid-April, MOSHTARAK Phase III transitioned, in the broadest sense into something called HAMKARI ('Co-operation').[69]

The exact status of HAMKARI in TF Kandahar was in dispute. Planners referred to it as a "non-operation". HAMKARI was repeatedly called a "series of briefings" or a "series of events" but it was not an 'operation.'[70] This situation once again reflected the sensitivities of the Other Government Departments over the Operation GRIZZLY-KANTOLO issues back in 2009. Non-Plan HAMKARI's process was driven by Regional Command (South) and that ship's bow-wave pushed aside the rubber raft that was the Canadian government departments as it continued in the pursuit of security for the (by now) terrified Afghan government leaders and bureaucrats.

It took some time for TF Kandahar planners to confirm that MOSHTARAK Phase III was indeed HAMKARI as Regional Command (South) dealt directly with Afghan authorities. J5 planners had to develop "orders and intent by osmosis".[71]

There appeared to be little or no coordination with TF Kandahar's baseline operations plan, Operation WADANA WAL. Regional Command (South) essentially combined several items under the rubric of the non-plan. The existing Kandahar City Security Plan had to be examined and revised. Government officials needed to be protected at home, on their way to and from work, and at their places of work. A new series of peripheral checkpoints around the city needed to be built and manned: this was called the Security Belt Protection Force (SBPF). All weapons, cars, and most importantly madrassas, needed to be registered with the government. Intelligence fusion was crucial: that process required a complete overhaul.[72]

To be fair, implementing such a plan was beyond TF Kandahar's capacity at this point. TF Kandahar was already stretched thin handling a Canadian battle group, two American battle groups, working with the Afghan 1-205 Brigade, and anticipating complex reliefs in place by an American cavalry squadron in Dand and an American brigade in Zharey and Arghandab.

In its drive to get the job done, Regional Command (South) did not liase effectively with the Afghan leadership. It appeared to many in TF Kandahar that Carter's headquarters was, in fact, imposing itself on the Afghan security forces and not working alongside them. The Security Belt Protection Force, for example, was not accepted by the Afghan leadership, who ensured that TF Kandahar staff knew about their concerns. They also did not think that the Kandahar City Security Plan, which they created with Canadian mentoring, needed to be radically changed. The Afghan army commanders were leery of the SBPF: they knew their troops would rather conduct military operations in the districts, not policing operations in the city. Ultimately, Regional Command (South) leveraged its influence activities in Kabul and slowly gained Afghan compliance with their approach, but it took time.[73]

The implications of 'non-plan' HAMKARI for TF Kandahar were significant and Canadian contributions still potentially valuable. The need for substantial infrastructure improvement meant requirements for engineering and contract capacity. For example, all of the existing Police Sub-Stations in the city needed refurbishment, and an additional nine needed to be surveyed and constructed. The Municipal Support Offices, which were the equivalent of joint district coordination centres for the Kandahar City districts, needed hardening too. That also demanded a robust contracting capacity. The Task Force Engineer Regiment led by LCol Jennie Carignan was already well-situated to handle this and other tasks with Maj Bryan Mialkowsky's Engineer Construction Squadron with the former Specialist Engineer Team now incorporated into it.[74]

The decision to create the regiment paid dividends here. Though TF Kandahar lacked the engineering construction capacity to handle HAMKARI, it could command units that had the capacity. At the time, the 22nd Naval Construction Regiment from the US Navy

(historically known as the Seabees), was establishing the 'bed down' facilities for incoming American units. 22 NCR was tasked to provide one of its units to TF Kandahar so the Kandahar City security infrastructure could be built as rapidly as possible.[75]

Command and control aspects were crucial, given the large number of activities occurring simultaneously. That led to the creation of an Operations Coordination Center-Kandahar City, similar to the OCC-P that existed at the provincial level. That development actually added to the confusion so the two organizations were for all intents and purposes merged to form OCC-K in May.[76] Eventually the Combined Team Kandahar City was established in July and took control of most HAMKARI activities as the spring and summer progressed.

Photo Credit: Author

The Joint Provincial Coordination Centre and its later incarnations were crucial to the fight for Kandahar, particularly in developing contacts in and exchanging information with the Afghan police forces. In its final form, the organization was manned almost completely by Afghan personnel.

Another important organization involved in HAMKARI was ASIC (Forward). Situated at Camp Nathan Smith, this was a compact multi-disciplinary, multi-national, multi-agency team that had the ability to fuse a variety of information inputs related to White Situational Awareness as well as enemy activity within Kandahar City and its immediate environs, and move that material expeditiously to those who needed it most. ASIC (Forward) was initially established to provide intelligence support to the Representative of Canada in Kandahar but

Ben Rowswell proved less than interested in its capabilities or products. At the same time, however, Major Bill Watkins at the ASIC realized that more horsepower was needed in the city and sprung Major Gordon Ohlke from the J2/J35 at Regional Command (South) to lead the new organization.

ASIC (Forward) was linked with the various Afghan security forces through the OCC-K at the Palace, the Afghan Ministry of the Interior at the PRT, and the Canadian ASIC at Kandahar Air Field. It connected to the estimated ten allied agencies working out of Camp Nathan Smith as well as the American-led Combined Team Kandahar City, who even tried to take control of ASIC (Forward). There were also informal connections to some of the Kandahari power broker's security forces. Crucially, ASIC (Forward) was able to run operations inside Sarposa Prison with the assistance of other Canadian organizations, which reduced the enemy's ability to use the facility for their purposes.[77] ASIC (Forward) also played a role in improving Canadian-American relations after various debacles: Bill Harris, the American PRT deputy, had an exceptional relationship with the Ohlke organization. ASIC (Forward) also contributed to cuing a variety of successful responses to urban terrorist activity.[78]

The enemy became aware of HAMKARI's existence in early May. There was an initial order to stay in place and not move about too much given the nature of HAMKARI's web of checkpoints and patrols. The insurgent leadership in Dand instructed their people to steer clear of the city, while other commanders were told they had to have permission from Taliban leaders in Quetta to even travel in or through Kandahar City.[79] By then, the 'hardening' plan was well underway and continued into the summer.

The OMLT: From Mentoring to Partnering?

Col Shane Brennan handed over command of the OMLT to Colonel Ian Creighton and his team in early May. On arrival, Creighton learned to his surprise that the TF Kandahar commander planned to dismantle the OMLT. This fact had not been conveyed to Creighton and his men while they were working up for deployment in the winter, and they were somewhat dismayed. The pressure, as it turned out, was not coming from Ménard but from Regional Command (South). Regional Command (South) looked at the directives coming down from McChrystal on partnering and interpreted them to mean that there was no need for OMLT's any longer and that the personnel in them could be re-roled. The new idea coming out of Regional Command (South) was that Canada should take over mentoring part of a new organization, 404 Maywand Corps, which was an Afghan police equivalent of 205 Corps and RC (South). Apparently, the Americans were going to relinquish police mentoring and there were going to be some gaps in manning the mentoring organization for this new formation.[80]

TF Kandahar was resistant and those involved in OMLT operations saw the removal of the company-level mentoring teams as a huge step backwards. The Afghan kandaks still needed mentoring at the company level and still needed access to 'enablers': MEDEVAC, fires, liaison, and communications with ISAF forces. It seemed to some that there was a push within ISAF circles to make the Afghan army appear more capable than it actually was for higher-level political purposes in Kabul and elsewhere. Some also believed that there was British 'poaching' going on: Lt Col Sherin Shah, the extremely capable commander of 2nd Kandak, was ordered to Helmand to be the deputy commander of a brigade there rather than to 1-205 Brigade. 2nd Kandak, the now former Strike Kandak, was turned into what the mentors called a 'blood bank' for the other kandaks in 1-205 Brigade.[81]

Ménard, for whatever reason, would not stand up to Regional Command (South), understanding that the OMLT technically 'belonged' to Regional Command (South). Once again there was a clash of prerogatives between Canadians at TF Kandahar and the British-run Regional Command (South), with Canadian staff officers at Regional Command (South) caught in the middle. The Australians, when confronted with the same situation up in Oruzgan, "told RC (South) to fuck off," while it appears as though the British OMLTs in Helmand were not dismantled either. Ménard caved in but worked with Creighton to develop a middle way whereby some of the company mentor teams remained in play during the transition with the Americans, and enough mentor teams were dismantled to satisfy the 404 Maywand requirement coming out of Regional Command (South).[82] And, once again, Canada's inability to leverage influence in Kabul prevented the legitimate issues with partnering to be raised in any meaningful way.

The issues with partnering versus mentoring in the Canadian TF Kandahar context were legitimate ones. In theory, every Afghan kandak now had to be partnered with an ISAF battalion or battle group. But what happened if there were more kandaks than battle groups or battalions? Like, for instance, in Panjwayi district, which was scheduled to get two kandaks? The OMLT company mentor teams did not just mentor: they enabled those companies so that ISAF fires, ISAF ISTAR, and so on could be employed in areas that ISAF did not have manoeuvre forces. Those support mechanisms would also be on call in the partnering context through the partnered ISAF battle group, but would not be in an un-partnered, un-mentored kandak. Canadian OMLT personnel referred to partnering as "Tastes Great, Less Filling".[83] Bizarre distortions emerged: if all operations had to be partnered, how did TF Kandahar 'partner' its Expedient Route Opening Capability teams or the Route Clearance Packages with the Afghans, who had no comparable capability?[84]

The new 404 Maywand headquarters mentoring role cut both ways. The Royal Canadian Dragoons who arrived expecting to do company mentoring with the Afghan army, for the most part, wound up doing administrative mentoring to Afghan police. Others saw the

possibilities of Canadian mentorship with 404 Maywand Corps as an opportunity to exert influence on the Afghan police but these ambitions were tempered by the realization that connectivity with CIVPOL at the PRT and TF Kandahar's relinquishing of control over Kandahar City made any such attempts incoherent.[85] In any event, the Canadian mentors that moved in to the partially-constructed facility reported that they were plagued with ongoing delays in construction, communications, and 'life support'. It would take some time to fully reach operating capacity at 404 Maywand HQ.[86]

Creighton was able to keep a couple of mentoring teams in play over in Zharey and Arghandab where the Americans did not have enough battalions to partner with the three kandaks in those districts. When Regional Command (South) representatives poked around and fulminated over their 'misuse,' they tried to get the leaders of the American battalions to issue a complaint. They refused to do so. For the most part, the American units in Kandahar did not like or want to partner with Afghan army units (though some did and did so effectively) and actually preferred to have Canadians doing what they saw as 'dirty work.' The Canadian mentors thrived in the task so to them it was professionally rewarding. Why fix what was not broken?[87]

A source of particular pride for the OMLT were the improvements in the Combat Support and Combat Service Support kandaks. Again, it was easy to focus on the fighting end, but the OMLT was about capacity building and that meant improving the administrative, medical, logistics, and support side of the house as well. By August 2010 the OMLT reported that 5th Kandak, the Combat Service Support Kandak, was "miles ahead" of its counterparts in other brigades, who tended to rob their combat service support kandak for 'warm bodies' to supply rifle kandaks with personnel to man checkpoints. The Combat Support kandak was apparently ahead of their counterparts elsewhere. Recon Company was active in the province as a quick reaction force. The combat engineers conducted heavy equipment operator courses and now had dump trucks, bulldozers, and associated paraphernalia. The artillery company was still slow to develop, however, but could fire illumination.[88]

Col Creighton continued to work with Brig Gen Basir but it was increasingly evident that Basir suffered from health problems. He was less and less inclined to deploy outside of Camp Hero and busied himself with administrative details. After nearly three years of war with little respite, this was not surprising for a man who was Soviet-trained and fought in the 1980s, led the pieces of his command as a post-Apocalyptic army against the Taliban, and then helped professionalize the remnants of it into the basis of the Afghan National Army in southern Afghanistan. There were substantial changes to the Afghan army in Kandahar and these nearly overwhelmed Basir.

The first of these changes was its remarkable growth, especially with the American influx and the Partnering Directive as it was understood at Regional Command (South) Headquarters.

The brigade laydown during the first six months of 2010 had 2nd Kandak and 6th Kandak in Panjwayi District with the Canadian battle group; 1st Kandak in northern Arghandab working with an American battalion; and 3rd Kandak in Kandahar City and lower Arghandab District. A seventh kandak eventually deployed into Dand, while 5th Kandak was based at Camp Hero with 1-205 Brigade Headquarters.[89]

Although Arghandab District was now outside the TF Kandahar area of responsibility, Canadian mentors continued to work there throughout the summer of 2010, often unnoticed as Canadian resources and attention were focused on Panjwayi and Dand. In late July, during a four-day Clear operation by Afghan troops in Arghandab, one of those mentors, MBdr Adam Holmes, called in artillery and close air support several times while his team was under fire. Insurgents approaching his position were only 50 metres away when MBdr Holmes single-handedly drove them back. Eventually wounded in a mortar strike, he received the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.

There was now going to be an entire American brigade for Zharey and Arghandab districts. That meant that a corresponding Afghan brigade had to be deployed and partnered with it. The resulting formation, called 3-205 Brigade, was formed in the summer of 2010. Several kandaks, or parts of kandaks, were cobbled together or otherwise cannibalized into the manoeuvre kandaks for this new brigade. 1-205 Brigade was robbed to form 3-205 Brigade which caused turmoil for months. There were not enough engineers for both Afghan formations, obviously a critical factor in an IED-heavy environment. The standup of 3-205 Brigade headquarters failed in July. The situation was so bad that Regional Command (South) eventually called the Canadian OMLT and asked if they could deploy mentors to work with 3-205 Brigade. The irony was not lost on LCol Creighton and his staff who were able to respond with a mentoring capability because they had kept it in their back pocket rather than throwing everything into the 404 Maywand Corps scheme.[90]

Some OMLT personnel were dismayed to learn from their Afghan contacts, however, that experienced kandaks were ostensibly being held in reserve by the Ministry of Defence in Kabul, and that this was being done to deter potentially hostile elements in and around that city other than just the insurgents. Or perhaps for other unspecified purposes that could not be ascertained 'down south'.[91]

Strategic Issues, May–June 2010

By April 2010 national security staffers in the Obama White House believed that, in the wake of Operation MOSHTARAK in Helmand, "the counterinsurgency mission [in Kandahar] would fail." As a result, ISAF commander Gen Stanley McChrystal and CENTCOM commander Gen David Petraeus briefed the American president on 6 May. McChrystal focused on the detrimental effects that Kandahari power brokers were having

on the efforts almost as much as the Taliban insurgency. After exposure to too many link analysis charts, President Obama opined, "This reminds me of Chicago politics….You're asking me to understand the interrelationships and interconnections between war bosses and district chiefs and the tribes of Chicago like the tribes of Kandahar. And I've got to tell you, I've lived in Chicago for a long time and I don't understand that." McChrystal and Petraeus confirmed that "We're not going to make Kandahar a shining city on the hill."[92]

What emerged from the briefing was a new sense of pessimism in the highest levels of American leadership. McChrystal was equally skeptical but told senior American leaders that Kandahar, referring to Op MOSTARAK Phase III, "could be a turning point." McChrystal was now, however, under pressure to show measurable results and that measurement of effectiveness was the ability to transfer cleared and held parts of Helmand to the Afghans, now. That was not happening six months after the President confirmed that transfer was part of the new strategy, and the lack of transfer did not please senior American officials.[93]

No matter what positive operational effects it had on the situation in southern Afghanistan, Operation MOSHTARAK was perceived to be a strategic failure in higher American political quarters and, not incidentally, by media outlets, because the transfer to Afghan control did not take place as effectively as anticipated. As we have seen in the last chapter, that evolution was fatally undermined by the presence of Karzai allies in Helmand and the precipitous drop in legitimacy they generated. Those reasons, those details, did not matter the further up the chain of command in Washington one went. Combined with the 2009 elections failure, and the intransigence of the Pakistan problem, this spirit of pessimism gave birth to yet another new American strategic approach, dubbed "Afghanistan Good Enough". That approach was influenced by a similar idea that emerged in Iraq around 2005-2006.[94]

"Afghanistan Good Enough" was a school of thought asserting that a minimum effort should be applied in Afghanistan to pursue larger American strategic objectives, specifically, hunting down and eliminating Al Qaeda in Pakistan. In the "Afghanistan Good Enough" view the Karzai government should be propped up but not massively supported, while unmanned aerial vehicles and SOF went after insurgent sanctuaries inside Pakistan from bases in Afghanistan. In this view, the complexities of development, legitimacy and counterinsurgency were of secondary importance. There was an opposing school of thought in American policy circles that emphasized a track designed to "maintain all of the development progress forged over the past ten years and to achieve a credible, negotiated settlement with the Taliban." Those who subscribed to this approach knew that this objective "would be much harder to achieve with fewer troops on the ground." The Taliban had to be forced to the negotiating table by facts on the ground, and that meant attrition of their leadership, holding the areas ISAF held, and continuing to build Afghan capacity.

The tension between the "Afghanistan Good Enough" crew and this latter school played out through 2010, with McChrystal, Petraeus, and U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton throwing their weight against "Afghanistan Good Enough".[95]

What did this mean in relationship to the Canadian effort? Canada had by this point already decided to withdraw by 2011. And, as we have seen, Canada was split on what approach to take. The 'developers' wanted to continue their version of development, regardless of the security situation, while JTF-A wanted to hold, build, and transfer the districts TF Kandahar controlled over to Afghan and American forces as part of the effort to keep pressure on the Taliban. SOF, of course, was part of attriting enemy leadership, an effort that also applied pressure on the Quetta Shura and its backers. What was disconcerting was the lack of confidence that those in Washington felt towards the Canadian-led or, perhaps, Canadian- coordinated effort in Kandahar. A lot was on the line for everybody involved and Canada could not afford to slip up. Operation MOSHTARAK Phase III was going to be a game-changer on many levels: in Washington, with ISAF in Kabul, and in Kandahar. It was not clear that the Ménard -led TF Kandahar understood just how crucial the upcoming operation was.

Relief in Place and Realignment, April–July 2010

The Herculean task of coordinating handovers to the American influx into Kandahar Province should not be underestimated. The reinforcing organizations came from several different formations, and in addition to being American each had their own organizational culture. Just as Canadian regiments were not alike, no two American formations were either. This placed a premium on patience at all levels. And, as before, the express intent at TF Kandahar was to ensure that there was not a repetition of the PRT handover problems encountered in 2005. The ASIC and ASIC (Forward) played a significant role in ensuring that there was as seamless a flow of intelligence as possible, as did the geodetics crews in the TF Kandahar Engineer Regiment.

Coincident to 'non-operation' HAMKARI, a brigade-sized multinational headquarters called Combined Team Kandahar City (CTKC) stood up in June, and eventually was taken over by the headquarters of 4th Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division later in the summer and transitioned into an American organization. Initially the 97th MP Battalion, which was tactically controlled by TF Kandahar, shifted to report to CTKC until its relief in place by the 504th MP Battalion in June. Once these changes were completed in the summer of 2010, TF Kandahar was no longer involved in command functions in Kandahar City. The Stab A company and ASIC (Forward) continued their operations at Camp Nathan Smith in what amounted to a command vacuum for some time. The exceptionally important OCC-P, now called OCC-K, also continued under Canadian direction.[96]

The largest 'muscle movement' was the handover of Zharey and Arghandab districts to the Americans. TF 1-12 and TF 2 Fury, as we will recall, came from different brigades but were tactically controlled by TF Kandahar in the first half of 2010. Dubbed "The RIP that would not die" by the TF Kandahar staff, it took four months to coordinate the withdrawal of the two American battalions and their replacement with a five-battalion brigade combat team commanded by 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile). This brigade was aligned to cover from Maywand in the west all the way to lower Shah Wali Kot in the east, and from Khakrez to the Arghandab River, north to south. Once Combined Task Force Strike was in place in late June 2010, TF Kandahar operations ceased north of the Arghandab River for the first time since 2005.[97] (see Figure 7-4)

It is difficult to convey today what a seismic change this all was for the coalition in Kandahar and particularly for Canada. In 2006 a single Canadian battle group, a 250-man Provincial Reconstruction Team, a company of Afghan National Army infantry and a company of police militia were responsible for the entire province under a brigade-sized coalition task force headquarters, which itself was responsible for operations in the five southern provinces of Afghanistan. In the summer of 2010, there were now nine American battalion-sized units and two brigade headquarters, plus a Canadian battle group and brigade headquarters working for what amounted to a multi-national divisional headquarters in one province. The Afghans now had two full brigades in Kandahar province under a corps headquarters and the police were organized into a divisional-sized organization with its own headquarters.

This shift had psychological effects on the Canadian military and civilian leaders who now had to adjust to the fact that they were no longer leading the coalition effort in Kandahar after nearly five years of war. TF Kandahar now was responsible for Panjwayi and Dand districts, and to support Canadian PRT operations, or what was left of them. TF 1-71 Cavalry remained under Canadian tactical control in the now reduced area of operations.

Expectations had to change, along with the style of operations. There would no longer be operations like ZAHAR or MEDUSA. And, in fact, there really hadn't been since 2006 in any case. As we have seen in this volume, the Canadian Army had already taken the lead on more decentralized operations and in partnering with Afghan security forces. Now, at least, Canadian and Afghan resources would no longer be pulled away for tasks in Helmand: a new ISAF regional command, Regional Command (South West), was established there and the see-saw games with the British over resource allocation finally abated.

These changes permitted TF Kandahar to focus on the intricacies of two districts and not be involved with more operational-level matters. That in turn further reduced Canada's salience in the coalition at the strategic level, though there were still Canadian officers populating the various ISAF headquarters to protect Canadian interests as much

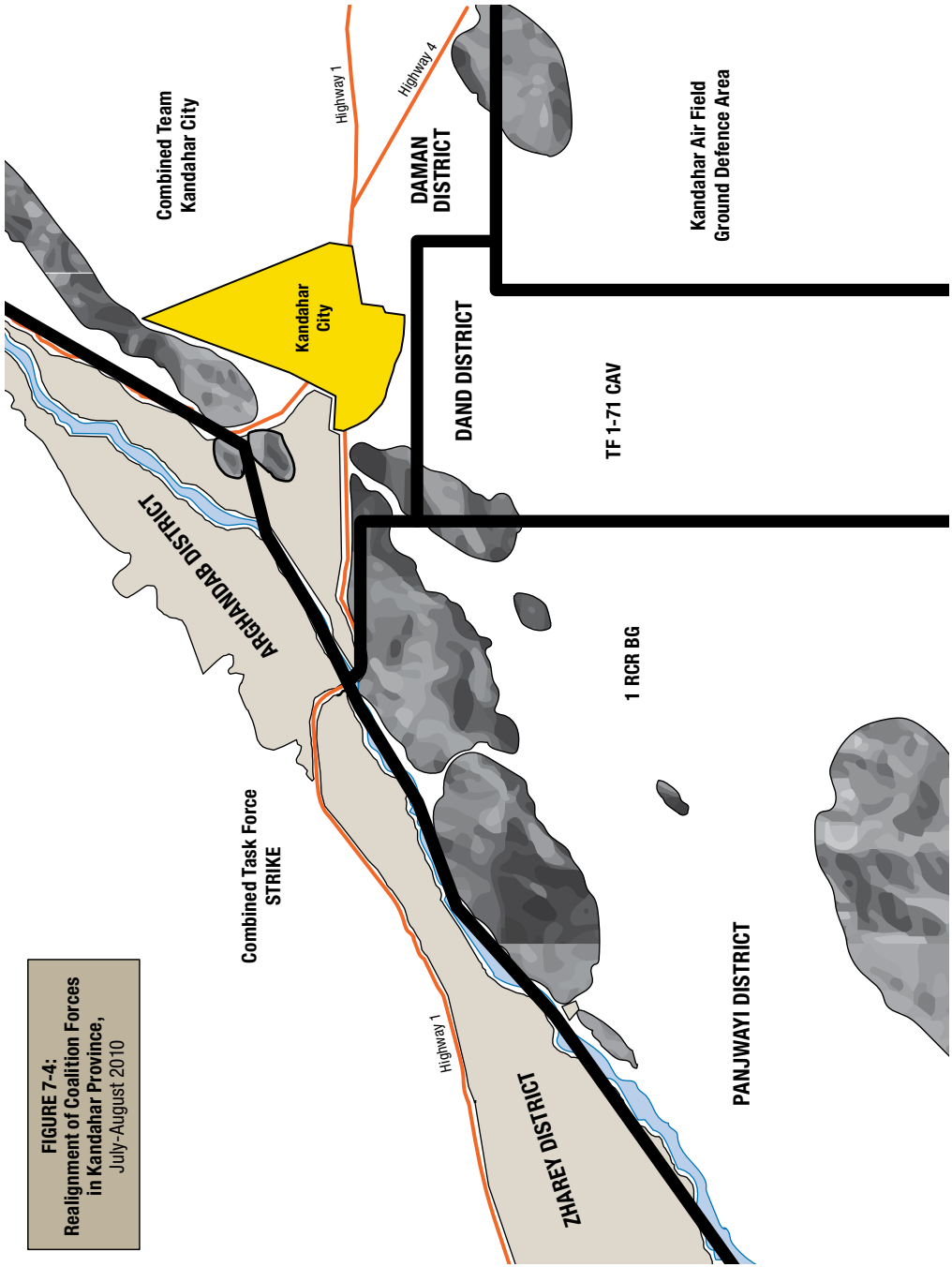

Figure 7-4: Realignment of Coalition Forces in Kandahar Province, July-August 2010

as possible. The dismantlement of SAT-A in 2009 and "The Divorce" in 2010 meant that there was no longer any national coherence in the Canadian mission in Afghanistan. Canada's war now shifted to a tactical counterinsurgency mission in two districts and a lingering but fading operational presence in Kandahar City. And, in that form, there was a lot of framework patrolling, CIMIC liaison, and construction, but few battle group-sized manoeuvre operations.

1 RCR Battle Group led by LCol Conrad Mialkowski gradually flew in to relieve the 1 PPCLI Battle Group in early May. Partnered with Lt Col Baris's 2nd Kandak, the battle group was fortunate to learn that the deputy CO, Maj James Price, had worked with 2nd Kandak when he was with the OMLT in 2007. 1 RCR Battle Group fell in on 1 PPCLI's dispositions, so Maj Steve Brown's O Company worked the central-eastern part of the district from combat outposts in Folad and Chalghowr, while the Afghans took over Mohajerin and Salavat. B Company, led by Maj Austin Douglas, replaced D Company in the positions in and around Nakhonay: Ballpeen, Patricia, Shkarre and Shojah. Charles Company, led by Maj Eleanor Taylor, was responsible for the Sperwan Ghar area and was augmented with Capt Mike Mendyka's Recce Platoon. The Afghan company handled positions along Route HYENA back to Ma'Sum Ghar. In effect, each Canadian company had an Afghan company from 2nd Kandak partnered with it.[98]

Recce Squadron under Maj Chris Lillington was re-deployed from Dand district into a series of observation posts to ensure that all major routes between the various positions were kept under observation, especially while they were being paved. These included OP Cliff, OP Onya, and OP Salavat Ghar. Recce Squadron headquarters went into the New District Centre where Lillington also acted as battle group liaison with the OCC-D Panjwayi. At this point, Recce Squadron had suffered attrition and was down to less than two seven-vehicle troops. The Coyote vehicles were breaking down and many had been destroyed over the past three years. Some of the vehicles were deadheaded. In one case a Coyote that was immobilized due to lack of spare parts was emplaced on Sperwan Ghar: its turret, gun, and surveillance systems still worked most of the time and it was used to engage IED emplacers on Route Brown.[99]

The tanks — now A Squadron, The Lord Strathcona's Horse, under Maj Rob McKenzie— continued to operate from Ma'Sum Ghar until they deployed to patrol and disrupt out of night laagers in the desert west of Nakhonay. The guns from D Battery 2 RCHA, led by Maj Stephen Haire, had only two pairs of M-777s to work with, based respectively at PB Sperwan Ghar and COP Shoja. The battle group's combat engineers were 23 Field Squadron under Maj Jim Smith.

1 RCR Battle Group also became responsible for a number of aerostats and thus had to form 'balloon platoon'. These were handled by a combination of contractors and Canadian soldiers. There was a large aerostat at FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, and two smaller ones at Sperwan Ghar and Shojah.

While the battle group relief in place was in progress, a debate emerged in TF Kandahar over where Panjwayi district operations fit into the larger emergent schema. Ménard was, according to his staff, looking for action and set his sights on the Horn of Panjwayi. On one hand, the case to clear out the Zangabad–Mushan axis was compelling. The enemy was running parallel governance in there and the networks were fueling the cells operating south of and in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and in Nakhonay. On the other, the Horn of Panjwayi could not be handled in isolation from western Zharey, and, as we have seen in previous chapters, the two operating zones were connected. That meant a larger operation to deal with both areas at once. And that meant higher-level coordination, that is, Regional Command (South) had to be involved.

BGen Ménard applied substantial staff horsepower to build a convincing case to re-take the Horn. To conduct this operation, however, meant releasing the tenuous hold on Nakhonay and shifting forces west. Something had to fill that space, and the American cavalry unit in Dand was not enough. Maj Gen Carter flew to the New District Centre on a visit and asked several Canadian officers, without Ménard present, whether they thought this operation was feasible. In an extremely awkward meeting, he was told it was not, that the battle group did not support it, and that it was essentially a 'bridge too far' at this time. Indeed, the events of May 2010 ensured that such an operation was not yet feasible. Carter, who was interested in 'mucking out' the Horn, put the concept on the back burner for the time being but seriously considered the idea.[100]

The Insurgency in Mid-2010

At this point in the war, there was significant debate over the nature of the insurgency in Afghanistan as well as in Kandahar province. Within the Ménard headquarters, there were two contrasting views. The first was that the insurgency was predominantly a rural, indigenous phenomenon. The other view accepted that there was a rural, indigenous component but that the insurgency had other components that were urban, and others that were external. ISAF commander Gen McChrystal's views tended towards the first: he believed that there were multiple, concurrent insurgencies throughout the country at the micro-level. Those who had been engaged in Afghanistan for some time, however, knew that the second was a more realistic assessment, especially when it came to Kandahar. Indeed, those who wanted measurable progress tended towards the indigenous view because it screened off troublesome issues relating to Pakistan and its complications.[101]

To complicate matters further, the disruption in Quetta vis-à-vis the Quetta Shura, Mullah Barader, the ISI and so on contributed to the argument that the insurgency was, in fact, tending towards the indigenous. The counter-argument was that the decline in the Taliban's relative power in the Quetta Shura meant that others, like HiG and Al Qaeda, might back-fill the apparent leadership vacuum. This was borne out by the Kandahar City assassination campaign and the increased involvement of outside forces.

What made the insurgency more dangerous in Panjwayi throughout 2010 than in previous years was the build-up of parallel governance in districts that were shifting away from negative governance to competing governance. The continued existence of a parallel legal system in Panjwayi district that included 'courts' in Zangabad, 'police' who 'apprehended' (kidnapped) 'criminals' (citizens who transgressed the Taliban) and took them to be tried, sentenced, and then beaten or hanged with near impunity was the major threat to government control in the district. Adjudication of grievances by Taliban 'officials' was a close second. Control over basic communications, in this case, the cell phone system and thus access to security, seriously contributed to the problem. That was followed by the anti-schools campaign in late 2009 and early 2010 which effectively shut down education in Panjwayi except for madrassas. Canadian patrols also learned that in some areas of the district Pakistani currency was used instead of Afghanis.[102]

There were increased rocket attacks at Kandahar Air Field throughout 2010. By the summer, attacks occurred every third day, including some in the daytime. These were Chinese- and Iranian-made 107mm rockets and thus were not of indigenous manufacture.[103]

By the summer of 2010 20 percent of enemy personnel in the Canadian area of operations were believed to be out-of-area fighters. Canadian analysts assessed that the local insurgency was "spiritually broken" and that it was increasingly run by out-of-area fighters from Waziristan. Canadian assessments detected a higher level of fear among the population. People were scared of the Pakistan-based fighters and this contributed to the increase in information on insurgent activity flowing from the Afghans to the Canadians.[104]

The Panjwayi district population remained caught in the middle. It generally did not trust the Afghan government, and with good reason. It would accept projects and money from Canadians. It would cater to the insurgency as required. But slowly it was succumbing to the tools of control that were still wielded by men in Pakistan. And the Canadians and Afghans were unable to compete with those tools in parts of Panjwayi district.

There were fewer grievances, stronger governance, connections to higher-order power brokers who had a vested interest in Dand. There had been a Clear that worked. There was a security force laydown. More importantly, there was psychological momentum that was lacking in Panjwayi. Dand gave the impression that is was a district that was going places. Panjwayi exemplified stagnation.

Kandahar City was essentially Chicago in the 1930s. The high levels of violence were an effective challenge to the authority of the Afghan government. That violence was internal and externally based. It was tribal and commercial, as much as it was religious or ideological. How could there be any hope in a place like Panjwayi while the spiritual, political, and commercial centre of the province was in such turmoil? And particularly if one's district leadership was continuously caught up in that turmoil?

Development and Governance Issues, Summer 2010

Development in Kandahar City was curtailed in the spring and summer of 2010 because of the assassination campaign. In March, the UN mission increased its threat level for the personnel operating in Kandahar. The immediate concern at TF Kandahar were the possible effects of a UN shut down of UN HABITAT and UNOPS programs in the districts.[105] In April, DAFA de-miners working in Daman District were targeted, with four killed and 18 wounded. DAFA pulled out of Kandahar. Ten days later, UNAMA announced the pull out of UN personnel. This was a bad portent for Operation MOSHTARAK III:

> Should this trend continue, the government workers and implementing partners critical for the roll-out of a range of governance and development initiatives in support of HAMKARI will be likely unwilling or unable to work. In conjunction with Regional Command (South), [TF Kandahar] and the [Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team] are working on initiatives to address these issues in the short term …[106]

On 26 April 2010, every CIDA reconstruction and development project carried out in Kandahar Province by UN-associated implementing partners ground to a halt, revealing once again a major defect of the partnership system in the hostile environment of Kandahar.

Reconstruction and development did not, however, completely stop in the districts. Canadian CIMIC could still move about and work with local communities. Stab A could transport Canadian stabilization officers to work at the district-level. The District Support Teams remained in place and were not completely dependent on UN implementing partners. And, importantly, the TF Kandahar Engineer Regiment did not have to attenuate its operations as dramatically or abruptly. The Engineer Construction Squadron retained between 500 and 800 locally employed people on various infrastructure projects during the height of the assassination campaign.[107]

The road construction and improvement strategy established in 2009 continued to progress in the TF Kandahar area of operations during this time. Route BROWN was paved from Sperwan Ghar to Route HYENA by July 2010. That dramatically reduced IED attacks on it. Over 55 percent of Route LAKE EFFECT was paved by SAITA

working in conjunction with the Engineer Construction Squadron by summer 2010. There were four smaller connector roads that linked Chineh, Haji Baba, Masur Ghar, and a number of other small communities to the primary roads in Dand and western Panjwayi. This allowed security forces to get into those communities and permitted goods for trade to get out. All of these were funded with Commanders Contingency Fund monies, as opposed to development funds 'laundered' through various UN agencies and NGOs. And, importantly, all had 'buy in' from the local communities who assisted with siting and land claims. Equally important was the fact that Governor Wesa continued to strongly support these and other road construction projects and supported paving in as many areas as possible to increase security.[108]

While collecting information to support the Representative of Canada in Kandahar, ASIC (Forward) learned from the Provincial Reconstruction Team engineering project management team in July that, due to the double stresses of refugee inflow and unregulated development, the city had outgrown its water supply infrastructure. There were fifteen publicly operated wells, six of which did not work. This situation left over two-thirds of the city's population without clean water sources. UN-HABITAT had already been given $7 million as part of a $24-million water project package by Canada back in 2008. There was still no statement of work. The US Army Corps of Engineers undertook a comprehensive hydrogeological survey of Kandahar City which identified future wells and the means to service them. This information was available, but UN-HABITAT refused to use the data as it was generated by a combatant. UN-HABITAT still had not undertaken its own survey of the situation. Obviously this was a hugely embarrassing situation for CIDA and caused a clash between CIDA and ASIC (Forward). The information was passed to an incoming US Army Civil Affairs Battalion so they could sort this problem out. CIDA, like many NGOs, rejected outright the military's involvement in development. Canadian methods in delivering aid were revealed to be weak and ineffective. The provision of clean water to Kandahar City would have been a major political victory for the Government of Afghanistan and a worthy goal for Canada. Unfortunately the issue produced a major credibility loss for Canada amongst Afghan officials at the municipal and provincial levels, and much dissatisfaction among Kandaharis.[109]

On the policing front, the mobilization of resources to deal with the threat to Kandahar City led to re-invigorated planning for MOSHTARAK III in Panjwayi, Zharey, and Arghandab. Regional Command (South) and TF Kandahar, working with the Ministry of the Interior and provincial police authorities, were able to gain commitments for a Focused Police District Development deployment for these three districts. Of importance to TF Kandahar was the planned deployment of the Afghan National Civil Order Police forces to Panjwayi so that the whole police force could be overhauled.[110]

Provincial governance, however, remained in traction. And, as usual, the problem was Ahmad Wali Karzai. Attempts to get the various tribally-based power brokers together in March was "hijacked by AWK at the last minute and turned into a two-hour press conference featuring eight speeches by Kandahar VIPs and a visiting minister" which led the delegates to abruptly depart.[111] This was one of the 'red lines' established by ISAF leaders back at the end of 2009. TF Kandahar and Regional Command (South) continued to support the planned Peace Jirga but learned too late that "some 60 well-known tribal elders with vastly different reputations reflecting powerbrokers interests and not necessarily broadly representative of the Kandahari community, have been chosen for the [peace jirga]… Due to the interference of the Provincial Council, the legitimacy of the selection process is questionable."[112] That was red line number two.

Canadian elements continued to press forward with polite engagement but by the end of April concluded that

> The soft diplomacy approach has thus far failed to yield tangible results. [The] intent may be to reduce [Ahmad Wali Karzai]'s involvement and influence in Kandahari matters. However, the friendliness of the meetings and the seniority of the officials engaging him seem to be giving him the impression that his influence is growing and that his input on the stabilization approach is greatly valued.[113]

Karzai continued to try to leverage his contacts to get forces deployed to northern Khakrez, yet again. Canadian analysts, apparently unaware of the long history of Karzai manipulations relating to Ghorak and Khakrez, assessed this to be a legitimate interest in security on the part of Ahmad Wali Karzai.[114]

The whole situation nearly lurched out of control in May. Afghan army Maj Gen Sher Mohammad Zazai openly accused Ahmad Wali Karzai of illegal land expropriation. This resulted in the suspension of the Provincial Council by its membership and its chairman, Ahmad Wali Karzai. Zazai's allegation was deployed right after information was leaked to an American journalist that Karzai was allegedly involved in importing ammonium nitrate fertilizer that the enemy used to make IEDs. The pressure was suddenly on from multiple external sources as the international media took interest.[115]

As ever, there were wheels within wheels. And, as before, this complexity had an impact on Canadian operations in Kandahar. Maj Gen Zazai was in the middle of an extremely complex bureaucratic manoeuvre involving the creation of a second brigade for Kandahar and the deployment of more kandaks to the province. This evolution was crucial to the

stabilization plan for Panjwayi, Zharey, Arghandab, and Dand districts. When Karzai and his allies counterattacked to discredit Zazai, the planning was undermined and the situation became unstable. Word was passed that Zazai was about to be re-assigned far away from Kandahar.

Then word came down that a new provincial police general would be arriving: Khan Mohammed. Khan Mohammed was the last surviving Alikozai leader from the Mullah Naqib days, the rest having been assassinated back in 2008. Khan Mohammed, not incidentally, was less than enthused with the Popalzai and Barakzai power structures in Kandahar.[116]

The pressure on Ahmad Wali Karzai amped up yet again in May. A complaint came in from two persons who claimed to have been prisoners in an illegal Karzai-run jail in Daman District. In addition to all of the other usual allegations of corruption, one even claimed that there was a criminal link between Ahmad Wali Karzai and Taliban commander Mullah Shakur, and that Shakur had been killed as a result of Karzai manipulations of coalition forces to "ensure his involvement would never become public."[117] The matter now took on a life of its own and the saga continued right until Ahmad Wali Karzai was shot by his bodyguard on 12 July 2011.

What is important here is that governance in Kandahar was completely compromised in the summer of 2010, which in turn had negative spin-off effects on the Afghan security forces' command and control. Coming on the heels of the failed 2009 national elections, and in the midst of an assassination campaign, there was no way that the population was going to support any incumbent provincial leadership. All TF Kandahar could do was prop up those Afghan elements that were still in play, counterattack judiciously against the insurgency when and where it was possible, and facilitate the American influx.

The Kandahar City Assassination Campaign, May 2010

The killings in late April produced (the by now scripted) Operation ATAL response. In early May, several caches and a propaganda production facility were uncovered during these large cordon and search operations. ATAL's real success, however, was that these operations flushed the insurgent 'game' for the specialist hunters. A series of raids on 3-4 May that were superimposed on ATAL netted five cell leaders and killed one. Another cell leader was bagged trying to exfiltrate the city.[118]

Information gleaned from this operation provided insight into insurgent methodology in the city. Broadly, there were two types of 'action' cells. The first were the existing cells in the city linked to networks in the adjacent districts. These were probably older organizations. There were also several autonomous cells that conducted their own operations inside the city and had no connection to existing networks and cells. These were newer organizations. It appeared as though the Taliban leadership and/or the ISI could direct the

autonomous cells for a specific operation, as required. It also appeared as though specialists from Al Qaeda and Lashkar-e Taiba could be deployed to work on their own or to work with any of the cells in the city, as required.

The important aspect of this structural shift was that urban terrorist operations were less and less dependent on the insurgent forces and networks in the western districts and thus arguably less vulnerable to coalition operations generally. Not coincidentally, they were also more responsive to orders from Pakistan. Indeed, there was more and more information on ISI involvement in operations. One Taliban commander claimed that ISI wrote the campaign plan for the season.[119]

The lull after the raids lasted about a week. Lt Col Nabi Gul, the Sarposa prison office manager, was then gunned down. Gul had exceptionally close relationships with Corrections Service Canada personnel at Sarposa and was considered one of the 'uncorruptables.' This killing was particularly disturbing as it had the potential to undermine the substantial progress taking place at Sarposa. For example, ISAF commander Gen McChrystal established a special joint task force, JTF 435, "to oversee detainee operations after realizing that Afghanistan's prison system had become an out-of-control breeding ground for the insurgency."[120] JTF 435 was impressed with Canadian operations after its first visit to Sarposa and subsequently established close links to monitor insurgent personnel.[121] It was later determined that a captured Taliban commander incarcerated at Sarposa, who was about to be moved to Pul-e-Charkhi Prison near Kabul as part of a program to undermine the insurgent prison networks, had arranged for Nabi to be assassinated.[122] Further operations in the wake of the killing determined that this Taliban commander had links to the Kandahari power structure as well, which in turn illuminated those linkages for those interested in such aspects of the conflict.

The Afghan Border Police headquarters in Kandahar endured three suicide attacks on 16 May. By 20 May the number of people killed grew dramatically, so much so that the ASIC and ASIC (Forward) had trouble reporting it all. There were twelve murders in seven days, of which four were deemed non-insurgent related, five were insurgent related, and three were possibly both. Another killing included a USPI contractor on 26 May. A suicide car bomb attack against Camp Nathan Smith was then thwarted on 27 May: the weapon detonated with no casualties.[123]

A series of security operations in Arghandab led to the progressive neutralization of enemy leaders in that district around this time. Information collected during those operations led the hunters to cells inside Kandahar City. A raid late in May took out one of the city-based cell leaders that relied on a logistics ratline to Arghandab. And, in an independent action, the NDS bagged another Taliban commander who was responsible for the attack on the Afghan Border Police regional headquarters. Another independent

operation took out an enemy leader from the city who was either transiting or recuperating in Zangabad, Panjwayi district. The number of IED attacks in Kandahar City dropped off but the assassinations of mid-level personnel continued.

Dand District Operations, May 2010

Lt Col John Paganini's cavalry squadron launched Operation MA SHAM in the first 48 hours of May. This operation was designed to clear Gorgan and establish a TF 1-71 strong point. MA SHAM occurred without incident. The larger issue of Afghan police and the Hold and Build aspects of operations in Dand became problematic, not because of the Dand district police but this time by the Afghan National Civil Order Police. The ANCOP had been brought in under the Focused Police District Development program when the Barakzai militia indicated they would assimilate into the police. Only 50 percent of the planned ANCOP force arrived, however, which was not enough to backfill the Dand police. As a result, Provincial Reserve police were brought in to augment. The Canadian P-OMLT in Dand reported that there were problems with this ANCOP unit. For the most part, and for reasons understandable only to themselves, the ANCOP were extremely reticent to cooperate with TF 1-71, the Police OMLT, or the OCC-D. This was unusual as ANCOP units generally had a good reputation.[124]

It was evident to Paganini that Nazek had a grip on the governance helm in Dand. He sortied out regularly to broker community governance disputes and ensured that he was in touch with the population. One example was his implementation of the new government policy emphasis on schools. He told the small number of communities that were reluctant to have schools that they would be cut out of the District Development Assembly, and that if they wanted local projects, they had to have schools. As the CIMIC team reported

> The point was hammered over and over again that the security as well as the education issues in each village was first and foremost the responsibility of the local citizens under the directive of their Maliks … It was widely accepted and agreed that the children of Dand are the future of the nation and as such should be educated, but the feeling was evident that the village leaders seem content only to complain about the issues and agree upon solutions without any action to see them through to fruition. The ANA commander made it perfectly clear that the dependence on ISAF had to stop and that the people of Dand need to stand tall and be proud to fight for the freedom they now possess instead of arguing and fighting over tribal issues and discrepancies of the past.[125]

At the same time Nazek worked with CIMIC, CIDA, DFAIT, P-OMLT, TF 1-71 and the OCC-D to implement a district stabilization plan that involved improving relations between the 134 Community Development Councils and the district-level governing bodies.[126] In some areas Canadian CIMIC was already turning over certain functions to the Culturally Structured Youth Employment Program in the communities.[127]

On the security front, Dand was relatively quiet. There were three IED strikes, all conducted using methods to get around the countermeasures systems on the vehicles. In two cases, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle coverage over the district and other ISTAR resources tracked the 'button men' from their hides. Two teams were apprehended, and in another case a team was tracked back to their production facility, which was raided and shut down. The civil order police got into a skirmish towards the end of the month and bagged one member of a small insurgent IED team.[128]

Overall, the insurgency in Dand stalled out. There were small numbers of individual insurgents making their way through the northern part of the district into Malajat but these bypass routes were hard to detect. There was intimidation in a pair of communities in western Dand. Central Dand was already consolidating under government control. The area south of the Tarnak River, however, was problematic, particularly the communities of Khadan and Nakudak, who did not send representation to the Dand government. Nakudak was assessed as a staging area for the insurgency in Nakhonay. Late in the day word came in that a certain Mullah Monib would arrive shortly to re-invigorate the flagging insurgency in the district.[129]

Panjwayi District Operations, May 2010

1 RCR Battle Group took formal control of its area of operations on 5 May. The infantry companies and CIMIC continued with established tasks: liaising with the UNOPS road project, discussions over school construction in Chalghowr, and new mosque speakers for Loi Kala. In less than a week, LCol Mialkowksi and his men had "fights everywhere we were. We were getting into TICs. There were TICs in Panjsher. There were TICs in Ballpeen, there were TICs at Patricia. Anytime we rolled, anytime we moved, we'd get into trouble. Sperwan was just a hornet's nest. Like, it started going mental."[130] (See Figure 7-5)

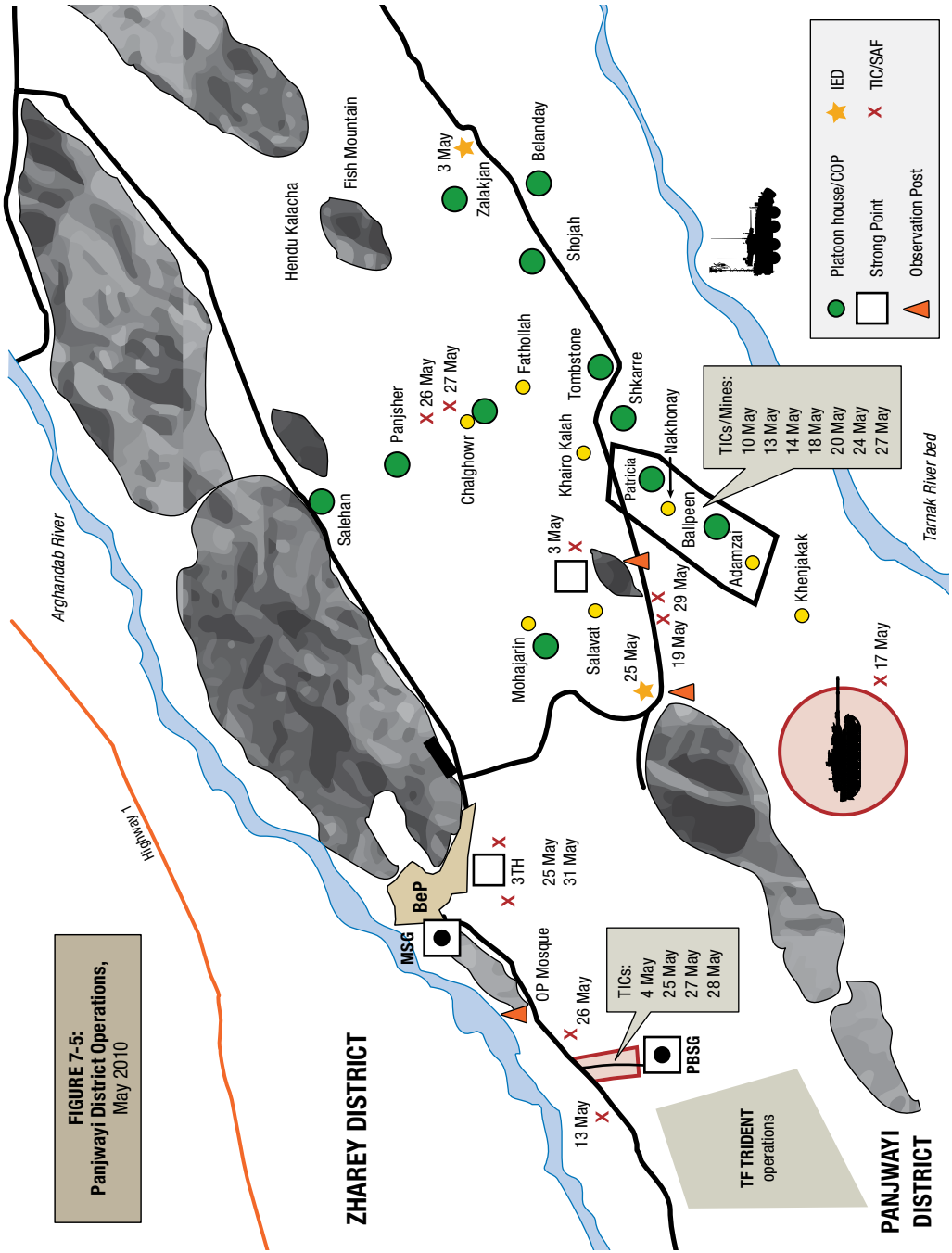

Figure 7-5: Panjwayi District Operations, May 2010

The Canadian assessment was that insurgent commander Hafiz Majid was back, with orders directly from the Quetta Shura to pressurize Panjwayi district. Mullah Qasim and Haji Amir, two experienced survivors, met up with him in Zangabad for further instructions. An eight-man team from Al Jazeera arrived in Mushan shortly afterwards with accreditation letters from the Quetta Shura. They met with Majid and others who then communicated with senior Kandahar insurgent leaders and told them to assist the media team in any way. The reporters apparently left behind several digital cameras for the insurgents to use during their summer campaign against the Canadians so they could pass images back to Al Jazeera for future broadcast.[131]

The summer fighting season started with a bang, with the first IED directed against TF Thor's route clearance package while it was clearing the road near Salavat, an area that had been relatively benign for several months. The next day, a Charles Company patrol found a large IED on Route BROWN. EOD Squadron rolled out to conduct an exploitation on the device. On their way out of the area, the team hit an IED, killing PO2 Craig Blake of the Fleet Diving Unit (Atlantic) and wounding two others. The assessment was that the leadership in Zangabad anticipated a Canadian-Afghan offensive down Route HYENA towards Mushan, and laced the entire area with IEDs.[132]

Maj Steve Brown and O Company were confronted with something new in their area. Aggressive patrolling in central-eastern Panjwayi generated reports from the locals that the enemy was mounting an intimidation campaign against the populations in Salavat, Mohajerin, and Chalghowr. Village leaders were ordered by insurgents to meet with Taliban leaders and warned they would be 'summoned' to appear in a Taliban court. One elder was told to meet a Taliban representative in Sperwan, of all places, where he was told he would be 'charged' with cooperating with ISAF. This elder apparently stood up to the insurgent representative and told him "he cooperates with ISAF because they wish to make his village a better place by helping the people, fixing the wells, and fixing their school."[133] Locals continued to turn in unexploded ordnance and point out IEDs to the security forces. Intimidation was also directed against a CMO-run project in Belanday, and an IED was laid to catch the Canadian team.

Maj Austin Douglas's B Company over in Nakhonay was on the receiving end of IED after IED. In one week there were four separate strikes that killed Pte Kevin McKay of 1 PPCLI and grievously wounded six other Canadians and a contractor dog handler. Aggressive patrolling and local input resulted uncovering a large cache of direct fragmentation charge IED's before they could be used.[134]

Photo Credit: Author

Several Shuras were held with the Nakhonay elders to convince them that it was in the community's best interests to expel the insurgents. Unfortunately some of these elders, including individuals in this picture, were, in fact, insurgent leaders.

The enemy engaged B Company with small arms fire in direct engagements towards the end of May. Consequently, the new district chief of police deployed twenty police into Nakhonay. Maj Rob Mackenzie's tank squadron then deployed into a laager west of the Adamzai Chain in order to disrupt enemy movement. From time to time, the Leopards would manoeuvre to support B Company as its platoons conducted operations out of Ballpeen. Insurgents engaged the tanks with RPGs in different areas, even in broad daylight. There was no damage to the tanks: they fired back and took out the teams.[135]

> Atmospherics in Bazaar-e Panjwayi were initially good. Framework patrols by the Afghan security forces, both partnered and unpartnered, led to the belief that "the lack of insurgent activity came to be credited to the solid performance of the ANA (2/1/205). According to locals the insurgents avoid Bazaar-e Panjwayi and the surrounding area because the ANA would discover them…a recent change of command of the ANP commander in Bazaar-e Panjwayi has improved the performance of the local police."[136]

Photo Credit: Author

Unlike Nakhonay, Bazaar-e Panjwayi flourished throughout 2010. Here a Canadian patrol navigates its way through the bustling market.

The dynamics of the policing situation in the district intrigued Canadian observers. From May to September 2010 the district chief of police was removed and replaced four times. The chief who lasted the longest immediately cracked down on Issa Khan, the corrupt police survivor who commanded the Salahan checkpoint on Route HYENA EAST who was the Malik of Salehan's brother. Reports came in that the Taliban were being invited into Salehan, and concern was expressed in Canadian circles that an IED cell was on its way to work out of the community. The new chief had no issue with deploying police to Nakhonay and made that happen, to the chagrin of the police officers who actually had to go and live there. The medical absence of Haji Baran positively contributed to the improved policing in the district.[137]

Eventually, thanks to police information, the remnants of the Nabi Network were identified to be still operating from Haji Habibollah, south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi. 2nd Kandak planned Operation OBEH SURKH and, with a platoon from Charles Company alongside, an Afghan infantry company cleared Haji Habibollah on 21 May and established

an Afghan army position to maintain security in the area. There was a brief firefight and the Afghans captured the gunmen.[138] Haji Habibollah now became the 'front line' and the insurgents engaged the position with small arms fire on occasion. Casualties were exchanged on both sides, and again gunmen were arrested by the Afghans. OBEH SURKH likely contributed to improved security in Bazaar-e Panjwayi by keeping the insurgents out of their traditional staging area into the town.

Maj Eleanor Taylor and Charles Company were confronted with a number of problems. The 28 Easting remained a physical as well as psychological front line, while Taylor had to maintain the security of Route BROWN and the HYENA junction. There were three communities that needed patrolling and security: Na'al Bazaar and Pay-e Moluk to the west of BROWN; the collection of communities east of BROWN to the Sperwan communities east of the forward operating base; and the communities to the east and south-east of the base, collectively known as Sketcha (This was the approximate area of the old Stability Box Sperwan described in Chapters 3 and 4).[139]

To accomplish these tasks, there was Charles Company; an Afghan infantry company from 2nd Kandak; three platoons from Weapons Company, 2nd Kandak in the three positions along HYENA; and the Canadian and Afghan artillery troops. Capt Mike Mendyka's Recce Platoon augmented Charles Company.

Charles Company, during their patrols, learned that the same intimidation tactics employed in central-eastern Panjwayi were also directed against road workers on Route BROWN. One elder was contacted by cell phone by an individual claiming to represent an insurgent commander. The elder asked for the reasons for the threats and for permission to work so that he and his men could feed their families. He then challenged the caller and demanded to know who his commander was. The insurgent demurred and hung up. The elder contacted CIMIC and said they would continue the work if they had security.[140]

But there were no police. The Afghan company, now with no mentors, would not conduct multi-day operations on its own or with Charles Company. Canadian platoons were cut away for higher priority tasks elsewhere, and then there was HLTA, which reduced the number of effectives. There were simply not enough forces to attain the primary objective of protecting the population. The constant 'shoot n' scoot' tactics employed by the enemy produced disproportionate heightened awareness among the coalition forces.[141] Several 25mm engagements against insurgents emplacing IEDs on the culverts took place, however, and in all cases the insurgents were killed.[142] EOD was called out on another device, which detonated and wounded one of the team. The enemy continued to emplace IEDs along BROWN and Charles Company was amazed at how it could be done while the road was under observation. An IED find by locals in one of the culverts resulted in

the deployment of a patrol to assess the device and wait for EOD. The enemy engaged the patrol with small arms fire. A Canadian soldier triggered another IED during this action, wounding him.[143] A more brazen incident on 13 May involved a simultaneous attack against the Afghan troops at OP Kyber and an RPG team that engaged a gravel truck convoy which subsequently accelerated out of the kill zone. The ambush force consisted of disciplined, out of area fighters.[144]

As a result Maj Taylor could not saturate the communities around Sperwar Ghar and could not generate the protective effects required for any CIMIC or development activities by assigning platoons to specific communities. Consequently, she shifted the company's mission to disrupt the enemy in the area in order to protect the population. Random patrols and other measures were employed but it was evident to the population that they did not feel secure with government and coalition forces and they essentially shut down contact with Charles Company and closed Na'al bazaar.[145]

The Recce Squadron continued its tedious but crucial task of keeping 'eyes on' the routes between Bazaar-e Panjwayi and the communities in central-eastern Panjwayi. OP Cliff, a desolate position full of moon dust and large, hot rocks, was instrumental in keeping the 'five fingers' road junction under surveillance. However, on 24 May a resupply run to OP Cliff was targeted with an IED that killed Tpr Larry Rudd of the RCD and wounded five others.[146]

A Company continued to patrol the central-eastern communities with their Afghan partners from 2nd Kandak. They received multiple reports of insurgent intimidation from people in and around Chalghowr. The enemy now openly engaged an A Company patrol in daylight. In a running gunfight, the Canadians bagged an insurgent. This particular corpse was equipped with a tactical vest and wore Merrell hiking boots, not the sort of equipment local Taliban used.[147] The following day, the enemy engaged COP Panjsher with small arms fire. Discussions with locals revealed that the enemy had, by now, established a curfew in Chalghowr, that anybody seen on the streets would be shot, and all antennas had to be taken down. Cell phone users would be fined.[148] A Company increased the number of patrols to provide security.

By the end of May, there were continuous engagements on Route BROWN, in Nakhonay, south of Haji Habibollah, and now Chalghowr. IEDs now appeared regularly on Route LAKE EFFECT and one targeted the TAC HQ convoy carrying the 1 RCR Battle Group deputy commanding officer. Shuras were cancelled, and no headway was made at the District Development Assembly. District Governor Haji Baran was away for medical reasons, so there was little or no leadership. Panjwayi was, once again, in trouble. The only apparent relief was the removal of insurgent commander Haji Amir by coalition

forces on 30 May in Panjwayi district. This action generated a significant amount of useful paranoia in the Taliban leadership ranks as they wondered who sold Haji Amir out and they ruthlessly scoured their ranks looking for a traitor that might not have even existed, producing even more disruption.[149]

Capt Mike Mendyka's Recce Platoon conducted close target reconnaissance and close covert observation tasks, usually in support of Clear operations 24 to 48 hours before they were launched. This included acquisition of 'local pattern of life' information. Over on Route HYENA, Recce Platoon emplaced a camouflaged remote infrared camera and collected movements data for several weeks. Abandoned compound roofs and high ground were also employed as observation posts. Mendyka's recce patrolmen sought signs of IED emplacement, tracked persons of interest, acted as 'human terrain' collectors, and provided LCol Mialkowski with 'brown SA' terrain data. Recce Platoon operated all over Panjwayi District accompanying patrols or occupying covert 'hides' on Salavat Ghar and other locations.[150] These capabilities contributed to the granular definition of key areas that were not under regular observation and enhanced battle group operations significantly.

Counter-IED Operations in 2010

There were significant changes to counter-IED operations by 2010. The focus of this effort was now EOD Squadron. Philosophically, EOD Squadron moved away from "attack the network" as its predecessors had, to "defeat the device". The "attack the network" approach now became a higher-order fight involving Regional Command (South) and the specialized integrated American units that were flowing into Kandahar. The ASIC assumed more responsibility for C-IED intelligence while the EOD Squadron fed technical intelligence to it as it was collected. The lab was also taken over by the ASIC and physical component and biological analysis responsibilities were handled elsewhere. EOD Squadron remained in charge of "prepare the force" training. It also deployed four C-IED teams that could conduct technical exploitation and also took over responsibility for the 'B-OMLT', a team training the Afghan army in counter-IED techniques.[151]

The deployment of more Cougar C-IED team vehicles facilitated EOD operations. Each team could conduct operations against the device as well as technically exploit it all at once. The main 'bot' used by the teams remained the Telerob EOD, though a lightweight 'bot' called the Dragon Runner was also introduced at this time. The aging Vanguard was no longer used.[152] The American Task Force THOR and the Canadian EROC teams, which were part of the C-IED effort but were not part of EOD Squadron, continued with route clearance operations on a routine basis in the area of operations. If they found a device, an EOD team would roll out and deal with it.

Enemy IED makers continued to innovate. By now they understood electronic countermeasures and its limitations. This was not just from trial-and-error use against Canadian troops. The bomb makers had access to continuation training provided by specialist personnel infiltrated into their operational areas, and they could rely on a virtual encyclopedia of data built up and traded by a variety of insurgent groups inside and outside of Afghanistan.

There were more and more victim-operated devices, many of them initiated by anti-personnel mines. AP mines were not improvised devices, that is, they were brought in from Iran and Pakistan. Iranian anti-tank mines were increasingly prevalent throughout 2010. Thus far, explosively-formed penetrators manufactured in Iran and used against American forces in Iraq had not been used in Kandahar. Though the use of radio-controlled devices decreased, they were still in use and there was evidence that their placement exploited the insurgents' knowledge of electronic countermeasures.[153]

The most important change from a Canadian perspective was the Directional Fragmentation Charge, formerly called the Direct Fire Fragmentation Charge. The DFC was an improvised weapon using a shell casing, home-made explosive, and rocks, nuts, bolts, or whatever was available, as shrapnel. These weapons were buried in mud walls at head and shoulder-level or in trees and designed to decapitate personnel. Some were triggered by command pull, others by command wire.[154]

The Canadian assessment was that IEDs were essentially tactical platoon-level weapons laid by sappers, as opposed to 'operational/strategic' devices designed for mass casualties and national information operations effects. Suicide IED terrorism remained a highly-specialized game played by professional cells that were involved in the religious-ideological nature of the larger conflict. The tracks for those operations led back to madrassas in Pakistan and increasingly outside of Canada's diminishing area of operations in Kandahar Province.[155]

The Ménard Affair and Vance's Return

On 25 March BGen Ménard experienced a negligent discharge of his weapon at Kandahar Air Field in which 3 to 5 rounds from his weapon were discharged as he was getting into a helicopter with the Chief of Defence Staff. An investigation into the event started the next day. On 16 April, nearly three weeks later, the Montreal Gazette exposed the fact that there had been a negligent discharge. Hyper-patriotic elements in the American media, still upset about the Tarnak Bridge event and Ménard's perceived role in it, took fresh aim at the TF Kandahar commander and dug for more detrimental information to use against him. In due course it was revealed that BGen Ménard had an inappropriate relationship with a subordinate while in-theatre and had, in fact, interfered with an investigation into that relationship. This information proliferated rapidly throughout the mediasphere, though it was already common knowledge in Canadian Army circles.[156]

Photo Credit: Author

Once Canadian troops shifted away from mounted operations and focused on local patrol tasks, the insurgents also altered their tactics and employed anti-personnel IEDs in the form of the Directional Fragmentation Charge or DFC. This DFC uses a Russian 152mm shell casing filled with home-made explosives, rocks, and nails.

This affair brought Canadian Army-U.S. Army relations in Kandahar to a new low. American military culture looked on extra-marital affairs with a jaundiced eye and such affairs were grounds for dismissal in their system. Canadian military culture tolerated

extra-marital affairs, but drew the line at fraternization in-theatre. That only added to the existing problems and perceptions of problems between the various allied commanders. The fact that there was some form of sex scandal, no matter how benign by North American standards, was potentially problematic in southern Afghan culture. The Taliban, of course, could now portray ISAF leaders as adulterers (who can be executed under stricter forms of Islamic law) and morally unfit rulers.[157]

Ménard was, by this time, exhibiting behaviour that greatly concerned his staff. Opposition to his extra-marital affair led his aide to request re-assignment to the Camp Nathan Smith. Deputy Commander Col Simon Hetherington finally had enough of the deteriorating situation and informed LGen Marc Lessard, CEFCOM commander, that the leadership situation was untenable.[158] BGen Dan Ménard was relieved of command on 29 May 2010 and sent back to Canada to face court-martial. Claims of 'victory' by American media continued to poison the well with the Americans and made it all the more difficult for Ménard's successor, BGen Jon Vance, to recover the Canadian position in Kandahar province.

At the same time, the Canadian-American relationship, badly damaged over the past six months, required special handling from both sides. Col Hetherington took the lead by gripping his staff and issuing blanket instructions to stop bad-mouthing the Americans. This was no longer 2006, Canada was no longer running the show, and a handover to the incoming American units was the plan, not the need to artificially maintain independent Canadian operations.[159]

> BGen Jon Vance was driving from Ottawa to Kingston and had just turned onto Highway 416 when his Blackberry rang. "It was General Leslie. He asked me if I was driving. I said yes. He said, 'Pull over.' So I did. And then he explained that General Ménard was being removed from command and that they want me to go back and reassume command of the task force. I said yes."[160]

On his arrival at TF Kandahar, Vance learned just how far things had gone astray. To him, the existing plan was essentially "KALAY on steroids". What Canada had done in Kandahar in the past was, for the most part, being done by Carter's Regional Command (South). The PRT was no longer focused on supporting the counterinsurgency effort, which in Vance's view undermined everything he and his headquarters had hoped to accomplish back in 2009. The civil-military relationship in Afghanistan was "totally fucked" whether it was between the PRT and TF Kandahar or TF Kandahar and Regional Command (South). TF Kandahar did not appear to Vance to be part of the RC (South) battle plan, and to the Canadian staff RC (South) was merely another command to bypass in order to get things done. It even appeared as though RC (South) staff was directly supervising TF Kandahar staff in some areas. All of this had, over time, produced an extremely toxic

working relationship between the two headquarters, with little or no respect. Even the padre was affected by the low morale in TF Kandahar headquarters. Operation HAMKARI, Vance learned, was being run by RC (South) staff who bypassed Ménard and tasked Canadian staff in TF Kandahar. They claimed that Ménard could not get "energized" on the Kandahar City security plan and thus had to reach down. It took Vance a whole week to sort out this incursion by the higher headquarters.[161]

As for the relationship with the Americans, Vance built on Hetherington's foundations and on his already considerable personal relationships with American officers who remained in Afghanistan from the time he commanded TF Kandahar. He found he had substantial 'street cred' and worked hard to reverse the damage.[162]

One of the first issues Vance had to address was the handover of Zharey district and Arghandab district to the 2nd Brigade, 101st Airmobile Division. That complex hand off, from two American battalions from two different brigades but under the tactical control of Task Force Kandahar, to an American brigade, had to be handled carefully and deliberately. Similarly, 4th Brigade from the 82nd Airborne Division was coming in to command Kandahar City, so that there were two complex transitions going on nearly simultaneously. Canadian units from those other districts had to be consolidated in Panjwayi and Dand. Vance was particularly concerned about the decision to relinquish command and control of Kandahar City and believed that the civilians at the PRT "felt abandoned" in the process.[163]

Vance even hoped to transfer Dand district to Afghan forces and move 1-71 Cavalry west into Panjwayi district. He also wanted to complete the Canadian Army's pull out from the PRT and "re-invest" those resources in the fight in Panjwayi and Dand. But everything had to be deliberate and it had to be a proper handover, not a repeat performance of 2005 where the American PRT did not conduct a proper handover with the incoming Canadian PRT. Ultimately, Vance wanted to present BGen Dean Milner and his headquarters, arriving to replace him in September, with a functional operational design for the remainder of Canada's tenure in Kandahar.[164]

Panjwayi District Operations, June 2010

For the first half of June, the battle group and 2nd Kandak confronted the insurgents in three areas: Sperwan Ghar and vicinity; Nakhonay, and now Chalghwor. Maj Eleanor Taylor's Charles Company continued to conduct disruption operations in the Sperwan Ghar area communities, though there was little that could be accomplished on the development front there. There was frequent enemy contact, usually of the 'shoot n' scoot' variety, but there were also significantly high levels of intimidation. One patrol produced a TIC which escalated into 81mm mortar use and a four-man enemy team was apprehended after a firefight.[165] (see Figure 7-6)

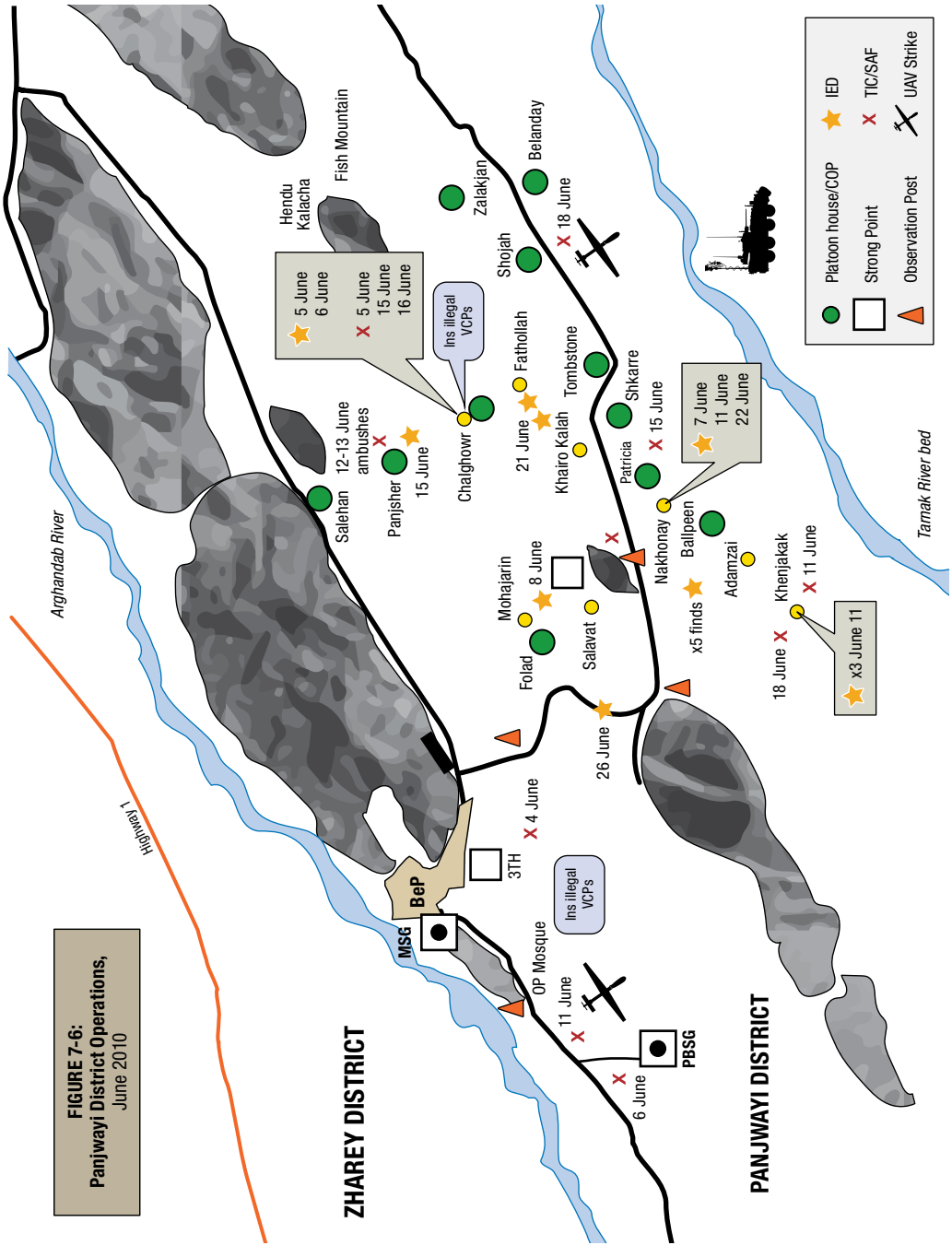

Figure 7-6: Panjwayi District Operations, June 2010

The ground cover, pushed back earlier in the year, grew with a vengeance and obscured observation down Route BROWN. An aerostat was now operational, however, which significantly improved surveillance capabilities. Patrols continued to meet with local elders, who passed on bad news: the bazaar was nearly closed because of the Taliban presence, and the insurgents were warning the elders not to have anything to do with the district government. There were simply not enough personnel to keep a grip on the two communities near Route BROWN. The Sperwan shura now went unattended.[166]

The situation south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi was sporadically active. The aerostat at Sperwan Ghar picked up a six-man enemy IED emplacement team south of Route HYENA on 11 June. A Predator was in the area and vectored onto the team and engaged it with a Hellfire. Two were killed and the wounded retreated to a pair of compounds south and east of the strike site. Charles Company deployed a platoon and raided the compounds. In one they discovered two large map models made of rocks of Canadian and Afghan positions. A number of IEDs were also exploited.[167]

Around this time Charles Company became aware that the insurgents were conducting vehicle checkpoints south and west of Haji Habibollah. Once again, the aerostat proved its value and the observers spotted four motorcycle-equipped insurgents stopping and searching vehicles. The police refused to react and claimed the road was probably IED'd, so a Canadian platoon moved to engage the enemy group. An MQ-1 Predator came on line and a pair of F-16s were also made available. As the Canadian platoon moved up an enemy RPG team took up positions: one F-16 attempted to engage the target and missed. The enemy escaped.[168]

The appearance of illegal vehicle checkpoints was of some concern. This was yet another weapon the insurgency used to establish power over the population and challenge the legitimacy of the government. Once the spotters knew what to look for, more illegal VCP's were identified. There was, however, no immediate solution.

Nakhonay remained an arena for confrontation in June. The primary indicator that the situation had deteriorated was the return of Haji Malim and his successful interference with the Nakhonay shura. In this he was supported with the covert inclusion of a Taliban commander on the shura who intimidated the rest of the leaders. This particular commander was known to be highly connected to the insurgent leadership and had the effect of suppressing any zeal for projects or programs. Emboldened by this support, Malim increased his intransigence. All community development projects now shut down due to lack of Afghan participation. Indeed, it turned out the Taliban were paying Nakhonians NOT to work and this was a source of power for Malim, who was the mediator.[169]

This situation led directly to a spate of attacks against coalition forces. Unfortunately Sgt Martin Goudreault, a combat engineer from 23 Fd Sqn, was killed on 6 June by an IED. On 11 June, there were four IED strikes on the roads between Nakhonay and Kenjakak, with no casualties. B Company surged out and acting on local information found an IED cache just west of Nakhonay. There were a pair of attacks on 15 and 18 June directed against Canadian patrols. The piece de resistance was a coordinated assault on COP Ballpeen from four different positions accompanied by 82mm recoilless rifle fire.[170]

Photo Credit: Author

Route LAKE EFFECT, the main service route from Bazaar-e Panjwayi to Dand and then into Kandahar City, ran past the problematic community of Nakhonay. The route was eventually paved to deter IED emplacement. Here a Canadian patrol moves east along LAKE EFFECT with Khabari Ghar in the distance and Observation Post CLIFF to the left.

The new enemy 'front' in Panjwayi was Chalghowr. ISTAR reportage suggested that there were four Taliban sub-commanders and about 25 insurgents equipped with new Russian weapons ensconced in the community, but it was not clear what their intentions were.[171] Were they part of the ratline into the city, or were they there to take pressure off Nakhonay? This community had not been a problem for months but on 5 June a Canadian and Afghan patrol led by O Company was shot at with small arms fire and sustained a

casualty in the area. The next day, while looking into a local tip about IEDs, a dismounted Canadian patrol triggered a device, wounding five. While exploiting the site, another device detonated, wounding a sixth soldier. EOD determined that the IED consisted of five mortar rounds attached to a PMN anti-personnel mine employing Iranian det cord. The day after, another patrol hit an IED. ISTAR reportage indicated that the insurgents were trying to generate casualties so they could target and shoot down a MEDEVAC helicopter. LCol Mialkowski closed all the patrol routes around the community.[172]

Pattern-of-life analysis determined that there was practically no local movement on the streets and civilians were even seen leaving the area. The battle group and its Afghan partners probed again and, while returning to Combat Outpost Panjsher, IEDs were found on two occasions on exfiltration routes used by the patrols. On 12 June a patrol was hit with a complex ambush. The patrol fought through the ambush but the enemy did not disengage and appeared to be operating with another insurgent sub-unit throughout the fight.[173]

Canadian aerial resources were applied to define the problem. A Heron UAV spotted insurgent vehicle checkpoints in Chalghowr which analysts interpreted to be signs of a deepening enemy grip on the community. A CH-146 Griffon equipped with an MX-15 pod also spotted possible IED emplacement. Another patrol probed the perimeter but was hit with another complex ambush. The Heron feed was instrumental in moving the patrol away from possible IED sites and enemy ambush positions. The emboldened insurgents pushed out IEDs to routes closer to Combat Outpost Panjsher: a route clearance team was hit while clearing the roads, disabling a Husky and its trailer.[174]

As more ISTAR resources were focused on Chalghowr, the nature of the enemy dispositions became clearer. IED emplacers laid a belt of devices and then deactivated them at particular times so the locals could work in the fields. There was a core of ten Pakistani insurgents working with fifteen local fighters. They understood Canadian and ISAF rules of engagement, in that they moved about while concealing their weapons. In some cases they did not carry weapons. Motorcycles were the preferred means to react to Canadian and Afghan patrols: the insurgents also had a spotting network with communications established to support it. They also had plans to assassinate or kidnap any government official they could in the surrounding area.[175]

The Chalghowr insurgency, however, was internally problematic. On 14 June five insurgent trainees detonated their own IED, killing four of their number and seriously wounding another. The blast also killed five children who were also present. As if demonstrating that they were still in the fight, the insurgents initiated a contact with a Canadian patrol. One Canadian was wounded in the volley of RPG and small arms fire. Pte John Nelson ran through enemy fire to recover the injured soldier and administer first aid. A CH-146 Griffon came on station and the insurgents fled to get away from

the helicopter. At this time, the TF Kandahar operations centre picked up enemy movement near COP Shojah from a MQ-1 Predator feed. An illumination round was fired to flush this team out of the trees, but they merely recovered the carrier round for later use as an IED. The MQ-1 dropped a Hellfire, but it missed. Tracking the fleeing enemy personnel, another Hellfire was dropped, finally taking them out. Four insurgents were killed, and two wounded in the strike. Pte John Nelson was awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.[176]

At the EROC and TF Thor clearance teams continued to hit IED after IED on the main routes in the eastern Panjwayi area, battle procedure for Operation AZADI was in progress. The idea was to clear Chalghowr, but there was an issue with establishing an enduring presence. The problem was that the Afghan army company deployed in Mohajerin and Salavat would not deploy on the operation because there was no well in their combat outpost. While that problem was being resolved Nakhonay heated up again. On 21 June combat engineer Sgt James MacNeil tripped a secondary device while another IED was being exploited, killing him. This delayed AZADI temporarily, but on 23 June the battle group and the Afghan army and police established a cordon and started the Clear. Numerous in situ IEDs were found and destroyed, and an IED cache was discovered. Ten individuals tested positive for explosive residue and were detained. During the operation, a roving MQ-9 Reaper spotted an IED emplacing team and engaged and killed them. On the second day of Op AZADI, more and more IED making equipment was uncovered and on 25 June, the battle group withdrew. The enemy came right back in and started operating in Chalghowr the next day. They ordered that all of the food and items supplied to local people by the ISAF and Afghan forces be burned.[177]

IEDs continued to generate casualties across the district as the clearance teams repeatedly struck them on main routes. Four Afghan soldiers were killed in one attack. A PMN mine was set up to kill an elder in the normally quiet town of Salavat. On their way to clear it, the reaction force convoy was attacked with an IED near OP Onya. The explosion catastrophically destroyed a clearly marked Bison ambulance, killing Pte Andrew Miller of 2 Field Ambulance and MCpl Kristal Giesebrecht of 1 Canadian Field Hospital, both medical personnel.[178]

This event was not effectively exploited by TF Kandahar or the Government of Canada for its information operations potential. There were no public protests made by Canada or the Red Cross to the Taliban and its backers for the Miller/Giesebrecht killings, nor was there any Canadian or other media outcry over their deaths, certainly nothing proportional to the excessive public criticism of Canada for its detainee policies by both Canadian and non-Canadian groups. Human Rights Watch, for example, did not produce a detailed study castigating the Taliban for murdering ISAF medical personnel, yet that organization

Photo Credit: Author

Photo Credit: Author

The insurgents sometimes used nomadic encampments as cover for their activities. After a particularly vicious IED attack against a Canadian ambulance that killed two medics, Afghan police with Canadian infantry as the outer cordon deploy to search one such camp for the perpetrators.

and others like it continuously criticized ISAF and the Afghans for their alleged failings during the course of the conflict. At the same time, personnel from the Health Support Services unit at Kandahar Air Field agonized over the legal implications of Canadian patrols confiscating medical supplies cached by the Taliban.[179]

Changes in Tack: Operation GADA HATSA and the Fighting Season

Within 36 hours of arriving in Kandahar, BGen Vance met with LCol Conrad Mialkowski:

> He hauled us all in and said, "You guys, stop what you're doing right now. You guys are acting like this is November, or January. You're in a fighting season. We're changing the rules right now. You are not conducting COIN. You have no ability to conduct COIN right now. Stop all the development you're doing." He said "We need to start doing very, very deliberate ops that are going to disrupt [enemy] activity."[180]

A week later, BGen Vance reported back to Ottawa that "With the fighting season well underway, characterized by an influx of foreign fighters to augment local insurgents, TF Kandahar has culminated in its ability to deliver COIN effects throughout much of the TFK Area of Operations."[181] Furthermore, the situation "necessitates the development of a new TFK operational design."[182] This was the basis of Operation GADA HATSA, the TF Kandahar Summer Campaign plan. Vance was determined to enhance force protection and, more importantly, regain the initiative.[183]

GAD HATSA was the overarching concept for July and August. The battle group's series of disrupt operations were dubbed AZADI 1 through 3 and focused on Sperwan-Bazaar-e Panjwayi area. Part II included any provision of support the Afghans and TF 1-71 Cav needed for operations into Malajat and surrounding areas; operations against any insurgent vehicle checkpoints; and any assistance required to support HAMKARI police strong points in the south west of Kandahar City. Part III was ill-defined. If operations in District 6 or Malajat needed support, or a sweep into Zhalakan area was required, TF Kandahar was prepared to provide it. These moves were provisional and subject to change on a moment's notice. For example, AZADI 3 was later shifted to target Kenjakak. An offshoot contingency plan, NOLAI, was a combined battle group-2nd Kandak -special operations TF 58 sweep into Nakhonay, possible for a Hold. TF 1-71 Cav had ideas about operations along the Dowry River. The idea behind the planning was to be unpredictable and disruptive in Panjwayi but still accomplish all of the tasks demanded by HAMKARI.[184]

A critical aspect of the summer campaign was the acceptance by all parties that development was winding down for the time being. Road construction, on the other hand, had to continue in part because of force protection issues vis-à-vis IEDs.

TF Kandahar focused those efforts on the connector roads in and out of the eastern Panjwayi communities, as opposed to the large projects which were supposedly being handled by Saita. The break with the PRT meant that paving could be handled immediately using Commanders Contingency Fund monies instead of waiting for the glacier-like process at the provincial level to produce results. The focused areas became Route BROWN near Sperwan Ghar; Walakan to Chineh; and Haji Baba-Route LAKE EFFECT. The preferred mechanisms to handle these tasks were the Engineer Construction Squadron and the Specialist Engineer Team using their contacts with local contractors.[185]

Another critical aspect of the plan involved recovering access to Canadian helicopter airlift from coalition pools and redirecting it for Canadian purposes. A series of internal air routes were re-jigged so that there was reduced reliance on ground transport, especially during the summer when IEDs were more prevalent.[186]

The psychological impact of having BGen Vance in the lead at this time was considerable. His experience was recognized by allies, particularly by the Afghans and Americans, and this generated confidence in the continuously demoralized atmosphere surrounding ISAF during the summer of 2010. GAD HATSA was the expression of this recovered confidence.

Dand District Operations, June 2010

Dand remained a development and security success story well into the summer. Reports from the various Canadian entities engaged in Dand confirmed that District Governor Nazek was integrating all of the governance and development components. The community development councils were up and operating and were connecting to the District Development Assembly. The OCC-D (Dand) was "optimistic" on the development front. The P-OMLT, however, reported that the Dand police were seriously underequipped. They had five operational vehicles and had to hitch rides with American patrols from TF 1-71 Cavalry. Their effectiveness was demonstrated, however, when they tracked and captured a suicide vehicle-borne IED before it could be employed.[187]

The main security problem in Dand, as identified by Lt Col Paganini's recon troops, was Gorgan. They had ISTAR reportage of possible IED emplacement and they heard there was a Taliban district shadow governor in that area. Rumours flowed that Gorgon also had an illegal insurgent vehicle checkpoint.[188]

On 24 June TF 1-71 Cav reported that there was an IED detonation in Gorgon but it was the emplacers who triggered it themselves. TF 1-71 Cav had further information that the Gorgan malik was communicating with the Taliban shadow governor and it looked like a replay of the Nakhonay-Malim problem all over again. The malik told the Gorgan elders that the IED explosion was in fact caused by an ISAF helicopter and the men were innocent. TF 1-71 Cav also picked up indicators that the enemy was probing the edges

of Dand, trying to find a lodgment. Gorgan was one area of interest, but they were trying to make inroads in Chineh as well with propaganda operations. Resources were applied to counter this development. TF 1-71 Cav's assessment was that the enemy was inexperienced and nascent- for the time being.[189]

More Command Turbulence: McChrystal Resigns, June 2010

The primary proponent of a counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal, was fired on 22 June 2010 by President Obama because of intemperate remarks made to a reporter by his staff regarding senior American political figures and allies. McChrystal's removal had several effects. First, McChrystal's removal enhanced the "Afghanistan Good Enough" school of thought in American strategic circles whose proponents wanted to de-emphasize counterinsurgency operations. Second, the removal cut the legs out from under MOSHTARAK Phase III as a mechanism to maintain the operational momentum established under MOSHTARAK Phase I and II. And, by the end of June 2010, a reporter noted that "very quietly, the much ballyhooed Kandahar offensive slips from public view."[190]

Within the space of six months, the military direction of operations in Kandahar province suffered from the unprecedented cumulative effects of the removals of one battalion commander, one task force brigade commander, a brigadier at Regional Command (South) and ultimately the ISAF force commander. The effectiveness of two more brigade commanders was seriously in question during this time.

Ironically, the most stable pillar of continuity during this time became Maj Gen Nick Carter and his staff at Regional Command (South). And, now that Regional Command (South) had already shot its bolt in Helmand, it could now focus on Kandahar. With the return of BGen Jon Vance in June, Carter could rely on an experienced Afghan hand and rebuild relationships between the two commands, despite an uncertain strategic future.

McChrystal was replaced with Gen David Petraeus, who was publicly credited with turning around the situation in Iraq. Arriving in July, Petraeus immediately focused his attention on what was happening in Kandahar. He was directed by Obama to, in the words of his biographer, "create the conditions for an end state that was tolerable: an Afghanistan that could secure and govern itself sufficiently to avoid once again becoming a safe haven for Al-Qaeda."[191] And he was given one year to do that.

Petraeus's first visit was to Kandahar:

> His battlefield circulation to visit the Canadians in the Taliban stronghold of Kandahar was designed to send a message: The alliance will not be deterred … Petraeus had worked hard while at Central Command to continue to engage the Canadians, who had announced

> earlier that year the end of their mission in Afghanistan to be the summer of 2011 … Petraeus considered the coalition to be hugely important and wanted support from all the coalition contributing countries as long as he could keep it.[192]

The ongoing effort to repair Canadian-American relations was now bolstered by COMISAF himself and, with Vance on the other side of the divide, the chasm seemed just that much narrower than it had earlier in 2010.

Kandahar City Assassination Campaign, June–July 2010

Enemy operations in Kandahar City shifted yet again by June as more and more IED cells were suppressed by coalition and Afghan operations. A series of operations outside the city picked off more and more enemy leaders, while Operation ATAL maintained the pressure within the city which in turn limited the enemy's freedom of movement. The situation was a significant turnaround in that senior enemy leadership now wanted commanders in Kandahar City to relocate their resources and refit elsewhere to prevent them from being neutralized by the security forces.[193]

The Afghan death toll continued to climb, however, as more and more enemy personnel turned in their AK-47s and were issued pistols and motorcycles. One rural insurgent network from the districts was completely re-roled and fed back into the maw.[194] Two other autonomous cells were activated and started operations. Their targets included a variety of people: A representative of the phone company. A police commander in District 9. A retired NDS officer. A police driver. An office worker in the prosecutor's office. An Afghan police weapons technician.[195]

Another addition to enemy TTPs was noted at the end of June when two alleged informers were found hanged in District 8. That was new in the city and indicated that a Taliban court was now active trying, sentencing, and executing people right in the city. This was a direct challenge to the legitimacy of the state.[196] The situation was just too terrifying for the Afghan police head of intelligence. He packed up and left Kandahar.

The death toll from the assassination campaign continued to rise. Abdul Jabbar, the increasingly effective district leader in Arghandab, was killed along with his son and bodyguard by a carefully-planned vehicle borne IED on 4 July. There were three deaths the next day, all in District 2. All three were people who worked with the security forces and all three were killed by two-man teams equipped with pistols and mounted on motorcycles. One team was captured by the police. Another police officer was assassinated as he left a mosque, and there was an attempt against a provincial council member. In a strange twist, a donkey was converted into an IED and used against a police target in the city, killing a child.[197]

In another strange development, the Taliban opened a tip line so local people could inform on government employees. The insurgents also added a help line so people could complain about lack of development in their neighbourhoods. Police analysis concluded that mullahs in some mosques were identifying government workers so that these people could be targeted by the hit teams thus confirming yet again that religious engagement was a crucial element of the coalition's fight.[198]

The assassination campaign motivated President Hamid Karzai to visit Kandahar City and hold a shura with district leaders and elders:

> A significant number of the Kandahar City district leaders do not believe that HAMKARI will have a significant effect, even though they support the operation. They are concerned that there are not enough resources committed to the operation and they will lack authority to hold off the insurgents once they return to their villages without adequate support from ANSF and CF. They are pleased with the concept of negotiating with the moderate Taliban, but would like the ability to negotiate at the local level. Considering that many low-level fighters are from the same tribes as they are, low-level insurgents are more likely to trust the village elder.[199]

Meanwhile, SOF operations were underway. One important raid was conducted against a Taliban IED specialist. Eight enemy were killed and the facility exploited. Further information led to a cache of ten command wire IEDs, all ready to go. Additional information came in that a major operation was being planned, possibly against Sarposa Prison or FOB Ghecko.[200]

The Afghan authorities decided to go hard into Malajat and District 7 which was adjacent to Sarposa Prison, and the location of a cluster of assassinations. Five hundred army and police surged into the troublesome district on 8-9 July but Operation KHAYBER accomplished nothing in terms of detainees, caches, or information and was likely compromised before it could be launched.[201]

It is possible, however, that Operation KHAYBER threw off the planned Sarposa Prison attack. The enemy shifted to the new Afghan National Civil Order Police headquarters in the west end of the city. At 2120 hours on 13 July a suicide vehicle-borne IED was used to breach into the base, and a pair of suicide bombers on foot exploited the breach carrying RPGs, which they fired at the security forces before blowing themselves up. Responding Afghan and American units were hit by IEDs as they moved into the area. Initial estimates were three American dead, fifteen Americans wounded, one ANCOP dead, eight ANCOP wounded, and five local nationals killed. The fact that the enemy was repelled at the wall of the base and could not penetrate further into the complex and kill more of the critically-needed ANCOP who were scheduled to be part of future operations in Panjwayi was considered significant by TF Kandahar.[202]

TF Kandahar handed over Combined Team Kandahar City to the incoming American units on 15 July and stepped back from operations in the city. There was one last assassination that affected Canadians. Fida Mohammad worked at Camp Nathan Smith as the gardener at least since the Canadians under Col Steve Bowes took over the Provincial Reconstruction Team in 2005 and possibly before that. Known as Popeye, Fida handled groundskeeping while his son played videogames with the Canadian troops. The usually silent but smiling Popeye would wave as he drove around in his Gator, watering the trees. On his way out of the gate on the night of 17 July, he waved to Maj Steve Knowell, I Company OC, and Dr. Sean Maloney, the Army historian, who were standing next to the Berry Room. Minutes after he exited the gate, a motorcycle pulled up and Popeye was thrust against a wall by two men. A pistol was placed under his chin and the trigger pulled repeatedly. Fida Mohammad, a gentle, inoffensive father and gardener, was believed to have been murdered by the Taliban in order to terrorize the staff at the PRT (though a family dispute may have also played a role in the killing). At his memorial service two days later, he was declared a *shahid*.

Photo Credit: Courtesy Maj Tammy Tremblay

The Camp Nathan Smith gardener, Fida Mohammad, was known as Popeye to the Canadians. Assassinated by the Taliban to terrorize the civilian staff, he was declared a shahid, or martyr, by the religious authorities.

The assassination shocked the PRT civilian staff into near-inaction for several days, while Maj Gordon Ohlke from ASIC (Forward), and Bill Harris, the State Department representative, stabilized and emotionally propped up the Canadian PRT leadership during that time. Colonel Tor Jan's men passed on that Fida Mohammad's killers had been identified, but they would be dealt with using Afghan methodology more closely associated with the Taliban period. Fida Mohammad's death was emblematic of the viciousness of the Taliban's campaign in southern Afghanistan.

Dand District Operations, July–August 2010

The development situation in Dand continued to improve in the summer of 2010 even though its security situation deteriorated. There was a lot of road work and retaining wall construction as agricultural engagement from the District Support Team took off throughout the district. Water testing was also introduced, and it uncovered unhealthy levels of E Coli and Arsenic in the well systems, leading to requests for better water treatment capabilities. On 5 July Dand was formally recognized as a district by the national government: this was a significant victory.[203]

However, the security forces were confronted with IED attack after IED attack daily for the first week in July. Eleven American soldiers and Afghan police were wounded, while SSgt Francis Cabacoy and PFC Edwin Wood were killed when their M-ATV was blown up while on patrol. Cold consolation came from the apprehension of a minor malik from a town near Gorgan who was involved in one of the attacks.

TF 1-71, the Afghan police, and the P-OMLT mounted up for a raid into the 'Fish Mountain' area. Operation CHANGAK focused on the community of Walakan, where the M-ATV had been blown up, as well as Hendu Kalacheh, both of which housed IED production facilities. This seam was generally not frequently patrolled. It was south of Route HYENA EAST, northeast Chalghowr, and west of the insurgent hotbed of Malajat just over the mountains, but north of most coalition activity in Dand. Sweeping in on 10-11 July, eighty-seven people of interest were identified and handled by Canadian-mentored Afghan police for processing. During the course of the operation, however, there were two more IED strikes, wounding three and killing Sgt Jesse Ainsworth and Sgt Donald Edgerton of 1-71 Cavalry.

IEDs continued to be an issue and consequently RAID towers were installed at American forward operating bases. Their unblinking eyes spotted emplacement teams on two occasions: A-10 aircraft and MQ-9 Reapers were pushed to Dand and both teams were killed with bombs or Hellfires. The Afghan police followed up on information collected from the sites and raided an IED factory loaded with homemade explosives and 155mm illumination rounds.

District Governor Nazek moved down to Gorgan to speak with community leaders, who expressed interest in a school–and in letting the current malik go. They heard about Belanday school and were interested in having one as well. Nazek's local diplomacy was considered a problem by the insurgents, who brought in a suicide bomber in an attempt to kill him. This attack did not succeed, but it killed five local people and generated significant outrage among the Dand population against the insurgents.

The major security issue, however, was identified by the Dand police. They understood the need for religious engagement, as did Nazek:

> … [the district leader Nazek] issued a letter indicating that every mosque shall ensure their respective mullah is present with two elders. The district leader made claims that he would close the mosques if the mullahs did not participate. The P-OMLT and the district chief of police discussed the value of the shura and the significance of including and not alienating the mullahs. The importance of their involvement is significant. The mullahs have the capacity to include or incite the local population for good or ill depending on how they are approached and treated. [The district chief of police] intends to extend every courtesy in order to ensure they are at a minimal not antagonistic towards ANSF or ISAF.[204]

However, the Kandahar authorities' neglect of the Dand police was wearing on him and his men. The Canadian P-OMLT worked with the battle group to release captured AK-47 weapons to the Dand police as an interim measure but that was not enough. The police went on strike and threatened to leave Dand by the end of August. They wanted Focused Police District Development training, weapons, vehicle, fuel and rations. The Canadian mentors reported that "This problem now stands to have operational impacts in undercutting significant gains made in governmental realms."[205]

Panjwayi District Operations, July 2010

Throughout July and into August, 1 RCR Battle Group and 2nd Kandak felt the effects of the arrival in eastern Panjwayi of the Taliban commander Janan Agha, who was deployed in late June by the notorious Hafiz Majid to motivate the insurgency there.[206] While the insurgents were reorganizing, LCol Mialkowski launched Operation AZADI 2 in the Sperwan area on 1 July: this was the next disrupt operation (see Figure 7-7). During the course of two days, Charles Company, augmented from the rest of the battle group, uncovered a small number of IEDs and had no contact. When the Canadians held a shura with the local leadership with Haji Baran in the lead, there was almost no attendance. That was chalked up to the "continued deterioration of District Governor Haji Baran's influence in the area."[207]

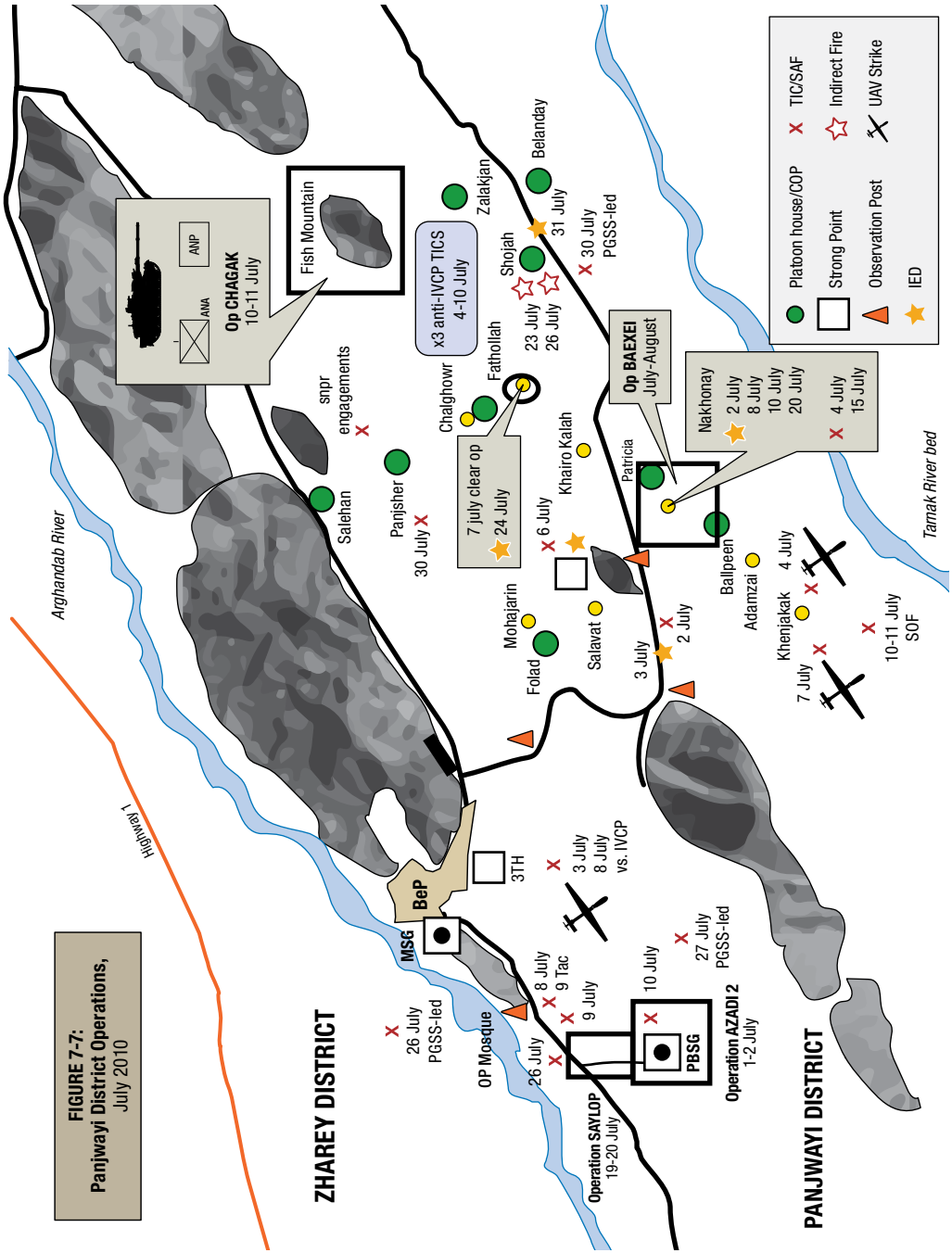

Figure 7-7: Panjwayi District Operations, July 2010

The insurgents, however, boldly attacked LCol Mialkowski's tactical headquarters as the convoy moved from Sperwan to Ma'Sum Ghar along Route HYENA. RSM Stu Hartwell's LAV III was engaged with a PKM machine gun and then hit with an RPG as the vehicle returned 25mm fire. The RPG round hit the ammunition storage bin and exploded. With smoke pouring out of the vehicle, RSM Hartwell was able to get his crew and a medic out of the vehicle as the ammunition cooked off.[208] Snap vehicle checkpoints caught four individuals as they were exfiltrating the area on motorcycles and in a van, but this was not thought to be the ambush team. The next day a similar ambush was laid on in exactly the same area, with similar weapons, against a Charles Company platoon conducting a battle damage assessment. In a forty-minute TIC, two Canadians were wounded. 25mm fire drove the ambush party back to a grape hut which was then hit with 81mm mortar fire and a GBU-38 from an A-10 aircraft. While on its way back to Sperwan Ghar, the Canadian platoon was engaged again by RPG and small arms fire.[209] The presence of an enemy team of 12 to 20 personnel that employed fire discipline, wore combat boots, and maintained a volume of fire that lasted over half an hour in the face of LAV III-equipped forces was a significant development.[210] Once more ISTAR scrutiny was applied to the area between Sperwan Ghar, Haji Habibollah, Bazaar-e Panjwayi, and observers noticed that there was a collection of insurgent vehicle checkpoints operating. Fly-bys by Griffon helicopters dispersed them but they quickly re-constituted. An MQ-9 Reaper came on station and observed weapons and an IED being loaded onto a motorcycle. The target was engaged with a pair of GBU-12 bombs. These were elements of the Hydari Group, brought in by the insurgent leaders to replace the now dead Nabi Group. The unblinking eye was now focused on this area throughout July.[211]

The two main problem areas in eastern Panjwayi district remained Chalghowr and Nakhonay. From these two locations insurgents pushed out to infect the communities that lay in between. O Company handled the area north of Route LAKE EFFECT, while B Company remained responsible for Nakhonay and environs.

Maj Steve Brown and O Company confronted two problems. There was insurgent infiltration of Salavat and Fatollah. This manifested itself with raft of IEDs, one of which killed an Afghan soldier, and 'shoot and scoot' small arms fire throughout July, but once a sweep through Salavat was conducted on 7 July, the area quieted down. Once CH-146 Griffon Weapons Teams were made available the emplacers and ambushers were shot up from the air on a regular basis as they retreated from their strikes.[212]

The second problem was the area between COP Panjsher and Chalghowr. Here the insurgents initiated an attack against the outpost with a "high volume of fire" on 5 July and then established vehicle checkpoints to delineate or otherwise define a line to screen the town from the outpost. They backed this up with a sniper, who engaged COP Panjsher

Photo Credit: Author

Photo Credit: Author

Nakhonay was eventually surrounded by development projects and placed in the middle of a web of surveillance systems in order to isolate and sift out insurgent elements. Measures included paving projects, CIMIC activities, and patrols by Coyote vehicles from Recce Squadron.

on a regular basis. A sniper team from 1 RCR infiltrated the area and targeted the enemy spotter system that was monitoring the outpost. A cat and mouse game developed around COP Panjsher over the course of weeks as the platoon and the sniper team tried to take out the insurgent sniper. An uneasy standoff developed in this area as patrols sortied out irregularly but were unable to affect the situation in Chalghowr.[213]

One Canadian–Afghan patrol tripped an IED, killing one Afghan. As the patrol established its cordon, they found two more IEDs before they could detonate. An orbiting CH-146 Griffon Weapons Team spotted women and children leaving the Folad community and then spotted a man with a phone and binoculars observing the events. As the helicopters prepared to engage, the spotter ran into a grape drying hut with another man. One Griffon fired into the hut, while the other shot the two insurgents when they ran out the other side.[214]

The insurgents now focused on COP Shojah, which was engaged by enemy mortar teams regularly starting on 23 July. Griffon helicopters tracked a mortar team to a white van which departed the area before it could be engaged, while the platoon in Shojah determined that there was a network of enemy spotters equipped with communications operating around Shojah who could call down fire when the mortar team was deployed and in range of the outpost. The sophistication of the enemy system was such that the spotters could adjust the mortar fire but were still inexperienced and could not actually hit the outpost.[215] IEDs were placed around Fatollah at the same time: five of them resulted in strikes against Canadian and Afghan patrols, wounding several personnel. Another IED detonated and killed a child.

On 30 July, O Company was confronted with another complex tactical problem: an insurgent group attacked COP Panjsher from three different directions. The platoon opened up with 25mm cannon fire and 81mm mortar fire, pinning the enemy force down until an A-10 could come on station. The enemy withdrew and dispersed before they could be engaged. Then a Heron UAV spotted a dig team north of COP Shojah. The battle group vectored in an MQ-9 Reaper and dropped a GBU-12 bomb on the team, taking it out. The fight north of Route LAKE EFFECT continued into August, but for the most part the lines were defined to the east, leaving Mohajerin, Salavat and the surrounding communities relatively unscathed. During the course of one patrol on 31 July, however, the enemy ambushed the lead element. Sgt Graham Verrier immediately launched a frontal assault against the ambushing force and repeatedly engaged the enemy until they withdrew. Sgt Verrier was awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.

The indirect fire situation against Shojah concerned BGen Vance, who asked what was being done about it and was told that rules of engagement and procedures were slowing response times down so that some engagements could not take place. Vance altered this state of affairs: when told there were complications getting authorization through the battle

space commander, Vance reminded everyone, "I'm the battle space commander and I'm going to start to get [pissed off] if we lose anybody to indirect fire."[216] Part of this change included authorization for the increased use of aerostat observation by Canadian forces in Panjwayi coupled with fires. This change significantly altered the freedom of movement calculus by the end of July, at least when the aerostats weren't having their mooring lines accidentally cut by American and contractor helicopters as they flew by.[217]

That said, the PSS aerostats at Sperwan Ghar and Shojah, and the PGSS at Ma'Sum Ghar were responsible for a number of successful engagements in late July. On 25 July, the enemy engaged the Ma'Sum Ghar aerostat throughout the course of the day. A pair of Griffons equipped with Dillon Gatling guns came on station to locate the shooters but then they were engaged. One of Maj Rob Mackenzie's A Squadron Leopard A26M tank stationed in a run-up position communicated with the tactical operations centre, where the aerostat data was displayed on a TV screen. The shooters were engaged with 120mm fire. Charles Company deployed a platoon to try and block the enemy who then withdrew. The Canadian patrol was then engaged by the enemy and a firefight developed. A pair of insurgents were killed while the others dispersed.[218]

Similar engagements took place at Sperwan Ghar on 27 July. The monitoring team spotted a four-man insurgent group moving to a known ambush site. They were engaged with 60 81mm mortar rounds, taking out the whole team. Immediately afterwards, an enemy mortar team flung a single round at Sperwan Ghar. The aerostat spotters were able to vector an MQ-9 Reaper to the site but the enemy departed before fire could be brought to bear.[219] Over at COP Shojah the following day, the aerostat team spotted an IED emplacement group but the enemy moved off before they could be engaged. An MQ-9 Reaper that was on station was then vectored in and the team was killed with a GBU-12 bomb.[220]

Operation BAEXEI: The Nakhonay Crisis, July–August 2010

Nakhonay likely constituted the enemy's main effort in eastern Panjwayi in July. Haji Malim apparently made a deal with insurgent leaders: he would not accept CIMIC and CMO projects if the insurgents did not lay IEDs in Nakhonay.[221] However, this 'deal' proved to be chimerically one-sided when an IED detonated, wounding two Canadians on 2 July. Recce Squadron, however, bagged a dig team with 25mm fire from their observation post at Salavat Ghar. The 'deal', naturally, was over IEDs: there was nothing said about limiting direct fire attacks with 82mm recoilless rifles against the combat outpost in the middle of town. Three Afghan soldiers were seriously wounded while the Canadian platoon responded with 60mm mortar fire and called in an MQ-9 Reaper. Unable to positively identify a target, it departed. A CU-170 Heron, however, picked up a man carrying an 82mm recoilless rifle near Adamzai where he climbed aboard a motorcycle with another man.

The Reaper was called back, dropped a GBU-12 and took them out as they were burying the weapon.[222] Maj Austin Douglas took stock and initiated Operation NOLAI, which increased the number of patrols in and around Nakhonay. The enemy backed off but continued to piquet south of COP Ballpeen with spotters. These were engaged with 25mm fire to keep them at bay, killing at least one of them. MQ-1 Predators continued to observe the area in and around the outposts in Nakhonay and engage with Hellfire missiles. On 6 July, "three bodies were found at the engagement site and one severed arm that did not belong to one of those corpses. 1 RCR BG believes that the fourth insurgent was either vaporized by the explosion or escaped on foot and died."[223]

NOLAI moved into the community of Imam Sahib, where another IED strike wounded two more Canadians on 7 July. This happened again on 9 July, this time wounding an interpreter. A night-time raid by what was euphemistically called a 'flanking unit', that is, SOF, neutralized an IED production facility in Kenjakak and seized 500 pounds of homemade explosives.[224]

Attacks against COP Ballpeen continued but this time a Griffon Weapons Team was orbiting. Once on station, the attack ceased and the enemy dispersed. Local people were divided on what was going on in Nakhonay: some provided information to patrols, but the lack of an effective police presence reduced the probability of gaining good information through connecting with the people. CIMIC was told that the inhabitants saw other communities with electricity and lights and that this was desired, but that Haji Malim told them they didn't need these services.[225] There were fissures and cracks to be exploited, but Haji Baran's loss of credibility hampered those efforts. Local people believed that Baran "is making too much money from projects while [we] see little money … Big projects use a machine to do all the work and only one person gets paid … if ISAF hired many people instead of using machines, more people would be working and thus occupied instead of joining the insurgents."[226]

As for the Afghan company working with B Company in Nakhonay, Canadians were told that its leadership was corrupt and the locals would not provide information to them, only to Canadians. A substantial amount of information then flowed in on an insurgent logistician in the area.[227]

What tipped the balance was an IED attack on a Canadian patrol on 20 July. A remote controlled direct fragmentation charge took the life of Spr Brian Collier from 1 Combat Engineer Regiment. The proverbial straw that broke the camel's back, Collier's death galvanized BGen Vance and led directly to Operation BAEXEI, the operation to secure the routes between the three combat outposts in Nakhonay and bring stability to the community.[228]

The main problem was that B Company was reduced to two platoons because of casualties and the HLTA leave plan; there were no police, and the Afghan company, also down to two platoons, was less and less enthusiastic about patrolling. Among them they had to defend three combat outposts, conduct patrols, connect with the population, and engage the insurgents when they could be found. There were simply not enough personnel. The enemy was achieving psychological ascendency in Nakhonay and that was generating two things: first, it was cowing the population not only in the community but also symbiotically with the people in Chalghowr, who could see that Nakhonay was a model to be followed. There was a tenuous Hold in Mohajerin, Salavat, and Fatollah, and Salehan to the north, which could break down. Second, Nakhonay was like an infectious disease when it came to Dand district and any reassertion of insurgent control in Nakhonay would have an impact to the east, while it was getting deeper into the Build. Something had to be done immediately.[229]

The problem for Vance was what to put into Nakhonay. Charles Company was deeply engaged in its fight in the Sperwan area. O Company was on a confrontation line with the enemy in Chalghwor. Both required partnered Afghan companies to operate, so that limited options: there were two manoeuvre organizations, not four. 2nd Kandak had nothing to send. TF 1-71 Cav was busy protecting the Build in Dand.

What about units from 1-205 Brigade? Or 205 Corps? They were tied up in a never-ending operation called AMKA in Arghandab District. 1-205 Brigade itself was having leadership issues. The need for other ISAF forces to have 'partners' for their operations meant that there were even fewer forces available than before. Canada no longer had the ability to leverage Afghan resources now that the government accepted a smaller role in proceedings. In essence, the loss of Canadian influence at all levels from Kabul to Kandahar played a role in preventing a timely and effective deployment of Afghan forces to Nakhonay.

The only viable solutions came from two sources. One was special operations TF 58, which could be used to destabilize the enemy until a stronger reinforcement force could be brought in. They launched a series of operations immediately after Spr Collier was killed.[230]

The second was I Company at Camp Nathan Smith, the current Stab A company. Led by Maj Steve Knowell, I Company's three platoons consisted of 55 regular and 40 reserve infantrymen mounted in LAV III, LAV RWS and Cougar MRAP vehicles. I Company was working in Kandahar City, patrolling with the Afghan police, protecting the explosive ordnance disposal team when it deployed, and delivering the Provincial Reconstruction Team's Other Government Department personnel to meetings. I Company also acted as the quick reaction force for the increasing number of SOF operations in the city, in this case TF 42, the British SBS, and on occasion TF 310, the American leadership hunters.[231]

Photo Credit: Author

I Company 2 RCR, originally deployed with the PRT, was equipped with the remote-weapons system variant of the LAV III. which served them in good stead in when the company deployed to the dangerous town of Nakhonay in the summer of 2010.

Using I Company to reinforce TF Kandahar's position in Nakhonay, however, became problematic. The Representative of Canada in Kandahar, Ben Rowswell, opposed the removal of I Company, arguing that I Company's job was to provide transport for his civilians at the PRT. The crisis escalated to the highest level in Ottawa. The result was that Vance was permitted to take two of the three platoons from I Company and deploy them to Nakhonay. This prioritization of abstract provincial-level development projects over the safety and security of Canadian troops in Nakhonay was yet another example of the philosophical disconnect that existed within the Canadian effort in Afghanistan.[232]

Operation BAEXEI was now on. Maj Nowell and his two platoons drove their LAVs to Nakhonay and moved into COP Ballpeen, and on 22 July they started patrolling Route Chimo, the line of communication connecting Ballpeen with Patricia and Shkarre. The community bristled with new checkpoints that brought complaints from the locals until Afghan soldiers told them they could either provide information on the insurgents or shut up and go home.[233]

The atmospherics changed dramatically. Information flowed again and for the rest of July there were no incidents. This bought Vance time to work on the Afghans and the allies to get a permanent Afghan presence in the community. The police in Nakhonay were compromised, however, and the Afghan company was not motivated. New personnel were required.

Photo Credit: Author

The deteriorating situation in Nakhonay led TF Kandahar to redeploy I Company from the PRT to eastern Panjwayi District. This surge, coupled with increased SOF activity in the area, temporarily stabilized the situation.

Panjwayi District Operations, July–August 2010

The issue with acquiring and deploying police to Nakhonay now fell into the hot box that was Panjwayi politics. There were increasing calls from elders in the district for the removal of Haji Baran, while others refused to show up at shuras where he was going to be present. His inability to connect with Haji Malim in Nakhonay was a further indicator that his star was waning.[234]

Baran's relationship to the Panjwayi Chief of Police, Sayed Gulub Shah Agha, deteriorated further over contracting issues related to the new police station. The chief refused to allow the contractor to continue construction because he did not have a say in how he was selected and thus did not get a piece of the action. The impasse led to the construction site being abandoned and caused a security problem at the New District Centre.[235]

Despite his extant low-level corruption, Shah Agha was instrumental in mediating a dispute between two of his subordinate commanders that itself threatened to escalate into violence between the men loyal to each personality. Baran wanted his bodyguard to continue wearing Afghan police uniforms but Shah Agha told him this was not acceptable any longer. The dispute escalated to the point where Shah Agha beat Baran up using a metal teapot. The 'Panjwayi Tea Party' then escalated to the point where Baran's forces and the Panjwayi police fired rounds at each other from their respective sentry towers. A Mexican Standoff developed, prompting intervention by the battle group and police headquarters in Kandahar City.[236]

The aftereffects of the 'Panjwayi Tea Party' included Shah Agha's removal, his replacement with a meek and mild subordinate, and the successive rotations of three other police commanders over a four month period. The men loyal to Shah Agha threatened to go on strike or leave with him if he was redeployed. The P-OMLT reported that there was only one trained police officer for the whole district. That level of turbulence ensured that effective policing was impossible for Panjwayi, let alone within Nakhonay itself.[237] Certainly there was little or no help from provincial-level police authorities, as there was little or no Canadian influence left in the these circles.[238] That left the Afghan army. However, the issues related to partnering, operations in Arghandab, and leadership changes meant that bringing in 1-205 Brigade troops was not an option at this point.

Meanwhile, over in Sperwan Ghar, Maj Taylor and Charles Company, supported by Recce Platoon, repeatedly uncovered IEDs on Route BROWN. A platoon pushed out to clear a compound of interest came under fire. MCpl Paul Mitchell provided covering fire with a machine gun, driving the enemy back, and after a series of gun runs from a Griffon Weapons Team, the insurgents broke contact. IED making material discovered in the compound was exploited and removed. MCpl Paul Mitchell was awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.[239] One of the jointly planned Afghan-Canadian disrupt operations, Op SAYLOP, was scheduled to go into the Na'al Bazaar area. However, a local tipster informed the appropriate authorities that SAYLOP was compromised, so the sweep was shifted to the communities east of Route BROWN instead. The sweeping force took some sporadic fire from both sides of the road, but no casualties. During SAYLOP, Charles Company troops were told by locals that the level of insurgent intimidation was so high that they could not be seen with Canadian troops, and there were not enough elders left to hold a shura. One of the elders explained that the Taliban left night letters but also came and showed them pictures of the elders from their files back in Pakistan. Baran could not protect them and there was still no police presence in the Sperwan area.[240] Word also filtered through that the Taliban in Zangabad were so confident of their hold on the population that they conducted their own polio eradication project, yet another clear challenge to government authority.[241] (See Figure 7-8)

The addition of the aerostat at Sperwan Ghar permitted better situational awareness, information that Charles Company acted on when possible. Its systems were used to vector in MQ-9 Reaper and MQ-1 Predators against insurgents operating against the Afghan army observation posts in the area. The improved coverage also permitted 81mm mortar support when UAV's were not available. The 25mm cannon on the Coyote emplaced on the top of the hill was also employed when targets presented themselves.

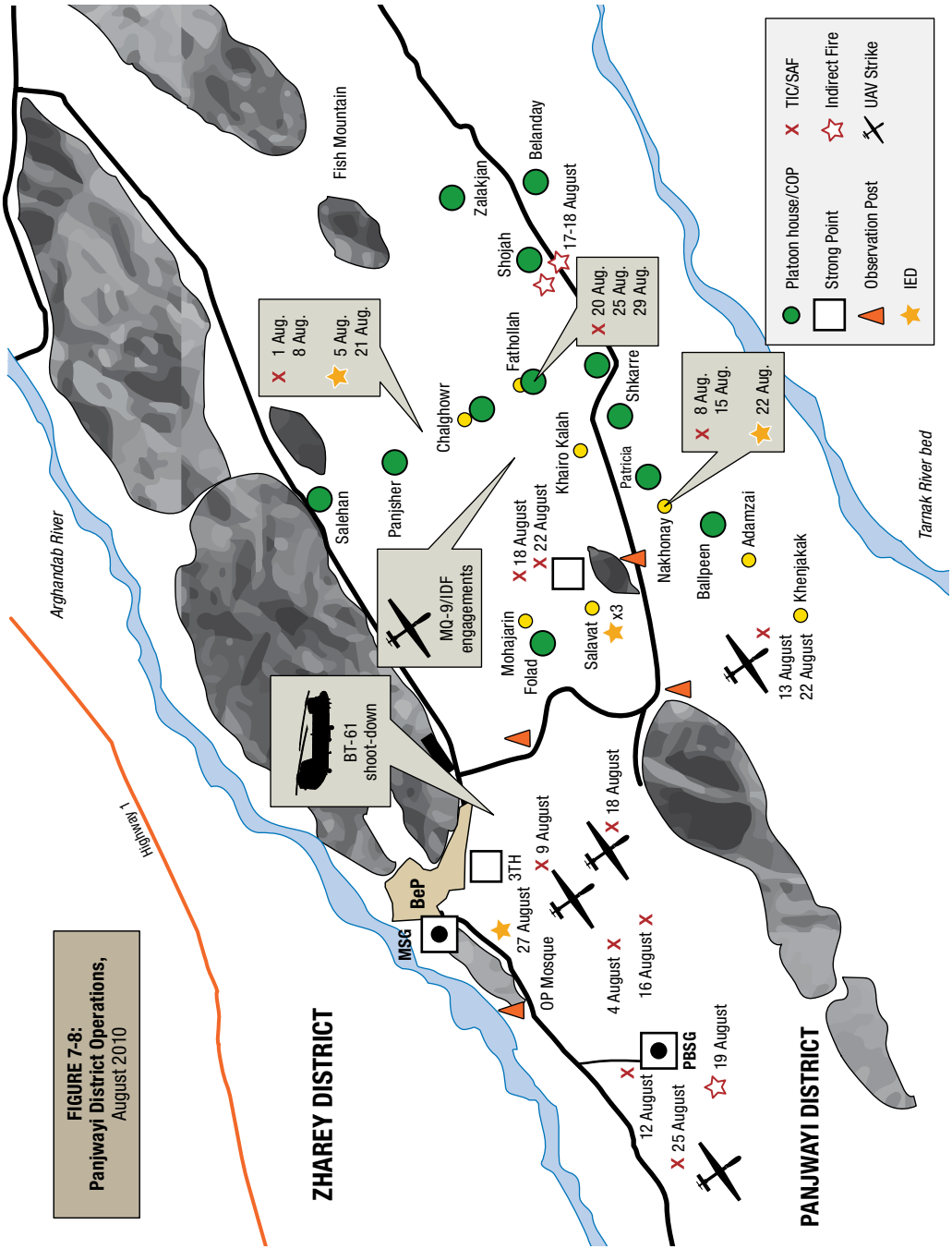

Figure 7-8: Panjwayi District Operations, August 2010

By August the situation in Panjwayi district noticeably changed both in the level and types of enemy activity. In Sperwan, there was almost no reported enemy activity until 12 August, when an Afghan-led patrol was engaged. While protecting themselves, the patrol discovered they were sitting on top of an IED. After winning the firefight, the EOD team sortied out, but were then ambushed. Returning fire with 25mm cannon, a call went out for assistance and an AH-64 Apache arrived and engaged the enemy position with Hellfire missiles and 2.75 in rockets. As the Canadians moved to clear the position they discovered trenches and tunnels that turned an otherwise regular grape drying hut into part of a deliberate fortification. Air support was called in to destroy the position. Other than a number of mortar rounds flung at the base and another armed UAV engagement near Route BROWN, the area around Sperwan remained comparatively quiet.[242]

Bazaar-e Panjwayi, however, saw increased enemy activity. The Hydari Group remained active probing the area south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi and in and around Haji Habibollah, and they established several illegal vehicle checkpoints. A bold ambush near FOB Ma'Sum Ghar directed against the Afghan army, followed by an IED attack right next to the base were demonstrative actions by the insurgents. What really forced TF Kandahar to take notice was the shoot down of a CH-147 Chinook on 5 August.

Callsign BLOWTORCH 61 was delivering the incoming battle group company commanders and their counterparts who were conducting recces for the relief in place in the fall. Civilians from the District Support Team were also aboard. After dropping off Maj Rob Mackenzie, Maj Eric Landry (the incoming tank squadron commander), and the Army historian, the Chinook lifted off from FOB Ma'Sum Ghar and was engaged by an insurgent heavy machine gun team between Ma'Sum Ghar and the district centre. The escort CH-146 Griffon, flown by the Air Wing commander Col Christian Drouin, saw the transport helicopter get hit and start to burn. He radioed the pilot, Capt Bill Fielding, and warned him his aircraft was on fire. The enemy gun team disappeared into the foliage-choked compound complexes near Haji Habibollah. Fielding was able to conduct a hard landing in a grape field. As the helicopter burned and melted, all 24 passengers and crew got out alive, only to be engaged with small arms fire. The orbiting Griffons engaged what enemy they could observe until ground troops led by Maj Taylor, who had also been dropped off earlier in Sperwan Ghar by the same helicopter, arrived on the scene backed up with a Leopard tank troop from Ma'Sum Ghar. The wreck site was engaged by the insurgents until these forces arrived.[243] Capt Fielding was later awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.

Photo Credit: Author

Canada regained a medium-lift capability in the form of CH-47 Chinook helicopters, significantly reducing road movement in the IED heavy environment. This picture of Blowtorch 61 was taken by the author minutes before it was shot down by insurgent forces.

When ISTAR resources were deployed to find out who was behind the destruction of the helicopter, the reports included an interesting nugget: Taliban leaders in Quetta had paid a bounty to the Hydari Group. On 8 August, the persistent ground-surveillance system on the Ma'Sum Ghar aerostat picked up an insurgent machine-gun team shooting at a police checkpoint from a position south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi. The machine-gunners disengaged when the police went to ground, and the staff of the Tactical Operations Centre at Ma'Sum Ghar tracked them to a rendezvous with two insurgents manning a vehicle checkpoint, and then to a bed-down area occupied by six more insurgents. An A-10 Warthog dropped a guided bomb unit on the rest area, killing all the insurgents. This machine-gun team is believed to have been the group that shot down BLOWTORCH 61.[244]

For the rest of August, armed UAVs were used to engage enemy vehicle checkpoints in the vicinity of Haji Habibollah. One strike involving the PGSS aerostat, a Heron UAV, and a pair of A-10s producing several enemy dead whose bits and pieces were subsequently removed by other insurgents using a wheelbarrow and a taxi. TF 58 was also employed to take out these small groups. This tit-for-tat game against the illegal vehicle checkpoints continued until later on in the month when the Afghan army moved into the area in greater numbers.[245] The importance of the losses inflicted on the Hydari Group was measured by the deployment of a senior Taliban commander to take over operations in the Haji Habibollah-Bazaar-e Panjwayi area in mid-August.[246]

Photo Credit: Author

The Tactical Operations Centre at FOB Ma'Sum Ghar. By 2010 aerostat-mounted cameras fed images to the TOC which could contact the Leopard tanks in their run-up positions and engage insurgents in Zharey district across the river with 120mm fire. Here the TOC crew has just observed the destruction of an enemy heavy weapons team. The insurgents were observed by an MQ-9 Reaper, vectored on to their position by the Ma'Sum Ghar TOC working with the task force TOC at Kandahar Air Field, and then engaged by an A-10 Warthog.

Maj Steve Brown and O Company were confronted on three fronts. The first was Salavat. As with the Sperwan area, Salavat was quiet until mid-August. Then an EROC sweep triggered an IED and damaged the Husky vehicle. At the same time ISTAR resources had been tracking an IED activator over the course of days in the area between Salavat and Folad. An orbiting CU-170 Heron, with its unblinking eye, gained positive identification as the insurgent plugged in a device situated on the road. A Griffon Weapons Team opened up with a Dillon Gatling gun as the insurgent sped away on a motorcycle. He wasn't fast enough and could not outrun the rounds. Towards the end of the month, another IED emplacer moved in and targeted Afghan patrols. One strike took out an Afghan army Humvee vehicle, and another wounded two Canadians. The new emplacer was augmented with a spotter and there were concerns that he would call in mortar fire. 1 RCR snipers took them out of the equation before this could take place.[247] Local people in Salavat told CIMIC that "local nationals [in Salavat] trust ISAF and ANSF, stating that the ANA and ANP are better now than they were six months ago."[248]

Photo Credit: Author

Observation Post Cliff covered the New District Centre-Khabari Ghar-Route LAKE EFFECT-Nakhonay leg of the surveillance web. This soldier is monitoring the area to the north, with the New District Centre at the base of the distant hills.

Then there was Chalghowr. The uneasy standoff between the occupants of Combat Outpost Panjsher and the insurgent forces screening and holding Chalghowr produced a series of IED strikes and contacts throughout August. On a particularly hot day a Canadian platoon noticed they were under observation from a spotter, so they engaged him. While manoeuvring, the patrol hit an IED, wounding one member. Then insurgents opened up on the patrol, who fired back and called in MEDEVAC. An AH-64 Apache and a UH-60 helicopter arrived, but two enemy signalers who waved flags to communicate to their associates that the helicopters should be engaged. These signalers were dispatched. The ambush force dispersed in the presence of the attack helicopter. On their way back to COP Panjsher, the patrol was engaged yet again. MEDEVAC was called in once they returned after having taken two more wounded.[249]

That night, a Canadian sniper took out an IED emplacer between Panjsher and Folad. A ScanEagle UAV also observed four insurgents in the vicinity and an MQ-9 Reaper was vectored in: they were dispatched with a GBU-12 bomb. Twenty 81mm mortar rounds were dropped on the area just to make sure.[250]

On 5 August, a patrol skirting Chalghowr hit an IED, wounding a dog team. While extricating with the casualties, the patrol identified enemy spotters observing the patrol's movement. These were successfully engaged. The enemy, however, re-established their checkpoint and continued to control movement in the area.[251] The insurgent's limit of exploitation was Folad, where Canadian snipers kept them at bay. Any time spotters were observed, they were engaged.[252] The enemy was also challenged from the air: there were a number of aerostat-cued armed UAV and aerostat-cued Griffon Weapons Teams missions in the gap between COP Panjsher and Chalghowr. The artillery joined in, again with aerostat observation. An illegal checkpoint and an IED emplacement team, also operating in the gap, were killed by 155mm fire and Hellfires from MQ-9 Reaper UAVs.[253]

COP Shojah remained a training ground for enemy mortar men throughout August but their learning curve was steep. The aerostat spotted one team, who were subsequently captured on 12 August, thus ending mortaring. The snipers operating out of Folad had several successful kills throughout the month, deterring enemy activity in the immediate vicinity.[254] All the while Maj Lillington's Recce Squadron kept the line of communications open from Route HYENA to Route LAKE EFFECT with its series of observation posts. There were no incidents involving those positions throughout August and with good reason: the Coyotes and LAV RWS vehicles had superb optics and the terrain was conducive to flat-trajectory fire in all directions.[255]

Maj Austin Douglas's B Company and Maj Steve Noel's I Company saturated Nakhonay. Despite the ineffective police, who were engaging in "persistent drug use, a lack of professionalism and leadership, seldom wearing of uniforms and a number of other issues," checkpoints and searches uncovered cache after cache. The Canadians were told, by the interim police chief, that the police commander in Nakhonay was "closely associated with the district leader and that this was a sensitive issue."[256] The Canadian assessment was that "Haji Malim's power-base rested upon his ability to provide security though his insurgent connections. Now that this influence is being marginalized by coalition forces' presence, local nationals are beginning to speak out against him more openly." Malim was now caught between a rock and hard place: he was under pressure to make things happen for the insurgents, but it was evident that the people were not behind him.[257]

There was almost no enemy activity until 7 August, when a CU-170 Heron picked up a PKM machine gun team moving south of Nakhonay. This team rendezvoused with six other fighters. No aircraft were available, so 81mm mortars and 155mm artillery pounded them. A Canadian-Afghan patrol nearby was inadvertently hit by stray 155mm rounds and these men were evacuated. The Heron, still orbiting, picked up another enemy group and this time French Mirage fighter-bombers were available. Unfortunately, their national

authorities did not permit them to engage. A Griffon Weapons Team arrived instead and gunned down the insurgents. 81mm mortar fire was used in an attempt to flush out the survivors from the trees. None emerged.[258]

The first IED to go off in Nakhonay in weeks was a radio controlled device that wounded two Canadians. Unfortunately, Cpl Brian Pinksen of the 2nd Battalion, Royal Newfoundland Regiment later died of his wounds in Germany after medical evacuation. Enemy spotters and propagandists were captured infiltrating Nakhonay during this time, while combined CU-170 Heron/MQ-9 Reaper operations continuously targeted enemy fighters moving into the Adamzai Chain. The insurgents tried again on 14 August and mounted an attack on COP SHASHEN, wounding three Canadians and two local children. The newly-arrived Afghan army troops sortied and took out four identified enemy spotters who were screening 600m south of the outpost.[259]

The importance of the Taliban bases in the Horn as insurgency generators was not ignored. A major SOF raid into Zangabad on 21-22 August resulted in a significant firefight and produced the deaths of fifteen insurgents, including one commander. A large mortar cache was also discovered and destroyed.[260]

The idea that development could take place in an environment like Panjwayi at this time was difficult to accept by elements at the PRT, but the Engineer Construction Squadron employed about 350 people, or half of what they had employed in the past, on a variety of projects.[261] The District Support Team worked on any project that was feasible in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and did not waste their efforts in places like Nakhonay and Chalghowr. The DST, however, was hampered by District Governor Haji Baran, who was unwell. Stephanie Duhaime, the Canadian DFAIT representative on the DST, was able to convince Baran to use the OCC-D(P) treadmill so he could try to avoid further medical problems. At the end of August however, word filtered down that Baran would be replaced with Haji Fazluddin Agha but when this change would actually occur remained vague.[262]

The PSYOPS teams reported that some of the population believed that

> The country is being destroyed by Pakistan and the insurgents that come from Pakistan. They are not killing ISAF. They are killing our Muslim brothers in the ANA and the ANP … the Americans are involved in dealing with the Taliban and the Pakistan government … Pakistan harbours the insurgents and the Americans do nothing about this … Pakistan is letting all of the American equipment travel through Pakistan without attacks occurring as they will have their equipment to kill innocent people … Pakistan is working with the kafirs (non-believers) to destroy Islam … the people do not support [Karzai] and if you want to win against the kafirs you must have the support of the people.[263]

It was entirely possible that the situation in the district had deteriorated to the point where rational dialogue with the population in parts of Panjwayi was just not possible given the cross-cutting currents of Taliban propaganda, the deluge of instant access to global media, the backwards messaging of illiterate mullahs, and the lack of education. People continued to get their information from the mullahs and at the mosques. In many cases mosques were used by the insurgents for their purposes and there was still no coherent religious engagement plan either at TF Kandahar, Regional Command (South), in ISAF, or with the Government of Afghanistan.

Attack on Kandahar Air Field, 3 August 2010

The frequency of rocket attacks against Kandahar Air Field significantly increased by the summer of 2010. There were nightly attacks and in some cases two or three separate attacks at a time. That was generally the extent of enemy activity against this vital facility.[264] For reasons which remain vague, however, the enemy chose to launch a daytime ground assault against Kandahar Air Field on 3 August. At 1120 hours a pair of rockets came in and struck the base. Then the Joint Defence Operations Centre warning system was activated, indicating that a ground assault was in progress. All personnel had to remain in their facilities and arm themselves. Then the alert state was raised to "load weapons". The Close Protection Party and 99 TAC personnel closed the entrances to TF Kandahar's compound and prepared defences. Another rocket attack came in at 1140 hours. Word came to the Tactical Operations Centre that Canadian troops on the perimeter were engaging enemy ground forces. An F-18 that was orbiting but could not land was able to get its imaging systems on the action and fed it to the Tactical Operation Centre. A helicopter-borne quick reaction force was in the air heading for the point of origin of the rocket launches. There were several casualties from the rocket attacks: medical teams collected and transported them to the Role 3 Hospital. Camp Hero, the Afghan army base, reported RPG and small arms fire directed at their perimeter. An AH-64 Apache and an OH-58D Kiowa Warrior were vectored in to assist them.[265]

The enemy ground attack took place next to a training area used by engineers to practice IED situations. By coincidence, the combat engineer field squadron's command vehicle, a LAV III (callsign ZE9) and crew was present participating in an IED demonstration for the media. An American Humvee was also in the area passing by. A farm tractor modified into a suicide vehicle-borne IED blew up and breached the fence line. A second suicide bomber breached the fence further east, while a third engaged one of the sentry towers with an RPG, wounding three Americans. The American Humvee crew opened up but as it turned out there were more enemy moving to exploit the two breaches. MCpl Marc-André Rousseau and his crew dashed under fire to their LAV III and started pumping 25mm rounds at the

insurgents. Secondary detonations were seen as follow-on suicide bombers blew up when shot up with the 25mm cannon. All the insurgents, likely between ten and twelve total, were killed. MCpl Rousseau was awarded the Medal of Military Valour for his actions.[266]

The media attempted to turn this assault into an information operations victory for the enemy by claiming that a daylight attack was some exponential change in tactics with significant implications. That line was countered by Maj Josh Major, the Tactical Operations Centre commander, who explained to them that ten insurgents essentially sacrificed themselves for 25 meters of chain link fence.[267]

By mid-August, rocket attacks against KAF dropped off significantly. The RAF Regiment successfully rolled up an 8-man rocket cell north of the base. From this operation, TF Kandahar learned that the cell used up the last of its rockets in the spasm attack of 3 August and were awaiting re-supply.[268]

Realigning for Future Operations

By the end of August, the situation in Nakhonay stabilized and the community was not experiencing the same levels of violence that it had in July. The problem was, where were the Afghan forces to conduct the Hold? The answer to that question related to larger issues involving Regional Command (South), the Afghan army, and the OMLT led by Col Ian Creighton.

Maj Gen Nick Carter knew that at some point the incoming American forces would be robust enough to occupy Zharey district. As we have seen, an entire brigade, CTF STRIKE, was scheduled to handle the entire Arghandab river valley north of the Arghandab River. With TF Kandahar occupying central and eastern Panjwayi, there was a gap and that gap was the Horn of Panjwayi, which was by this time a virtual Taliban statelet. Ménard's conceptualization of a push into the Horn could not be resourced earlier in 2010 but now it looked like some form of action could be undertaken.[269] The main issue now was the efficient sequencing of future operations. That involved moving in more Afghan forces to hold what had already been taken. BGen Vance had been working on the problem from TF Kandahar's perspective but the confusion over the future of Brig Gen Basir and 1-205 Brigade, the demand for partnered operations, and the priority effort in Arghandab were obstacles to a solution in July and early August.[270]

Prior to a meeting with defence minister Wardak in late July, Vance and Carter met to discuss what was now going to be called HAMKARI Phase III. All indications suggested that five kandaks would be made available for the TF Kandahar area of operations: one partnered with TF 1-71 Cav in Dand; two partnered with the Canadian battle group; and another two partnered with American special forces.[271]

The concept was to have TF Kandahar take these new forces, secure what was already a tenuous Hold phase in Panjwayi, then clear from Ma'Sum Ghar to Sperwan Ghar. That would establish the conditions for using Route BROWN as a line of departure for the clearance of the Horn. Two kandaks and their associated US special forces teams would conduct the Horn clearance. They would be supported with Canadian combat engineers and project support from Engineer Construction Squadron so that immediate effects could be provided to the local people as the force worked its way west. These forces would also prepare Route HYENA for paving. Checkpoints were to be established along the way and Village Stability Operations would work with police so they would not be 'trapped in the TI' as they had in 2007-2008.[272]

This schema allowed for the infusion of Afghan army forces into eastern Panjwayi prior to the start of HAMKARI Phase III. That meant that if Vance could sort out the arrangements, an Afghan company could be cut away, with Wardak's concurrence, as soon as possible for service in Nakhonay. It would take weeks to set the conditions for HAMKARI Phase III in any case and it would be better to have a tighter Hold in place in eastern Panjwayi and Dand districts. That would mean a complete re-alignment of forces in TF Kandahar's area, which also meant a lot of engineering work and contracts for bed down infrastructure, which produced jobs for locals, which in turn used money to reduce the number of local insurgent fighters. At the same time CTF STRIKE's operations had to be synchronized so that they could push to the river while the Afghan forces were flowing into Panjwayi. The entire effort would be called MOSHTARAK II.[273]

Vance understood that his headquarters would be rotating out in September and that his successor, BGen Dean Milner and his staff would execute the clearance of the Horn. To further complicate matters, the Carter Regional Command (South) headquarters was rotating out to be replaced by an American-led Regional Command (South). Consequently, the moves discussed between Vance, Carter, and Wardak had to be implemented promptly and every effort made to ensure continuity with successor headquarters.[274]

Vance and Carter agreed that this would not be a repeat of Operation MOSHTARAK in Helmand. There would be no 'government in a box.' This operation was not designed for strategic information operations effect, as MOSHTARAK I had been. There would be no 'Clear-Photo Op-Withdraw.' There would be military security, and the police would be ANCOP from elsewhere, not local police. There would be no opportunity for local power brokers to interfere. There would be, as Vance put it, a "creeping barrage of love" from CIMIC and Engineer Construction Squadron following behind the infantry and armour. Baran's malign influence would be replaced with the more benevolent influence embodied by Brig Gen Basir, if necessary, if a military governor was installed.[275]

The implications for TF Kandahar were immense but the key problem involved the incongruity of having two Afghan kandaks partnered with a single Canadian battle group. The solution? To Col Ian Creighton's delight, he was instructed to re-organize the OMLT and bring back company mentor teams.

One of the first moves was to get an Afghan infantry company into Nakhonay. The convoluted nature of the system meant that TF Kandahar had to send a platoon to Oruzgan, link up with a company from 3rd Kandak, 4th Brigade, 205 Corps, and escort them down to Nakhonay. By 20 August this new crew was in place and patrolling. The OMLT re-constituted and produced a company mentoring team from its resources and they joined the Afghans roughly at the same time.[276]

The next move was to identify another kandak for deployment to eastern Panjwayi and another for Dand. Now that Regional Command (South) was engaged, they handled the interface with the Afghan ministry of defence through Wardak. 6th Kandak of 1-205 Brigade was designated for Panjwayi, and 7th Kandak, 1-205 Brigade was earmarked for Dand. A second Canadian mentor team was then established to work with 7th Kandak.[277]

The new name for the Panjwayi operation was Operation GAD PASOON, thus eliminating the confusion that existed over HAMKARI and MOSHTARAK (though the old terminology remained in play for some time). There was, however, a new opponent to the process and that was Governor Wesa. Wesa's "constant calls for ANSF leadership to meet on a moment's notice is disrupting operational planning." Wesa "demanded" that 1-205 Brigade relocate to the city and kept insisting that more kandaks be deployed to patrol the city for insurgent vehicle checkpoints. Brig Gen Habibi himself deployed into the city but could not confirm that any such enemy positions existed. Habibi spent a lot of time convincing Wesa that there were other priorities.[278]

By mid-August, Vance and Carter were "continuing to encourage Governor Wesa to follow through with the replacement of District Governor Baran before the commencement of Operation MOSHTARAK Phase III Stage 3A." Wesa was reluctant, just as he was reluctant to have another Kandak in Panjwayi district. Yet word was already being spread by Haji Agha Lalai Dastagiri that Haji Faizal Mohommad was the next district governor. The new PRT director, Tim Martin, was increasingly enmeshed in Panjwayi governance dynamics. Wesa told everybody in a meeting that Baran had not been replaced. Wesa insisted that it was a tribal issue between the Alikozais and the Noorzais, and that the local population had to benefit from contracting opportunities in the district. Wesa continued to prevaricate for reasons unknown but likely related to the provincial power brokers and how the change in Panjwayi might affect their positions. Baran remained in play and the impasse continued.[279] Baran obliquely warned that "the security situation would likely deteriorate under Faizal Mohammad's leadership."[280] ISTAR reportage suggested that

a pair of HiG operative approached Baran in August seeking to insinuate themselves into his confidence now that he was on the way out and willing to communicate with them.[281]

The relationship between TF Kandahar and 1-205 Brigade also changed in the summer of 2010. The long-suffering Brig Gen Basir was told by the Corps commander in the middle of the ATAL operations in Kandahar City that he was being replaced. Insulted, Basir walked away from the operation when it was in progress. An interim deputy commander was thrown in but he did not work out, so Col Habibi, a former 1-205 Brigade deputy commander who had a mentoring relationship with LCol Dan Drew back in 2008 was brought in to command 1-205 Brigade. This, according to observers, was a breath of fresh air. Habibi immediately asserted his authority and rapidly grasped that under partnering, he was the supported commander. There was a complete shift in energy for 1-205 Brigade. Habibi got 'out and about', visiting every element in the brigade and providing much-needed inspiration. OMLT personnel noticed a distinct sea-change. Indeed, Habibi was not afraid to openly disagree with BGen Jon Vance on occasion.[282]

Supporting Task Force Kandahar

LCol Tim Marcella took command of the National Support Element in April 2010. This particular rotation was notable in that it served three TF Kandahar commanders: Brigadier Generals Menard, Vance, and Milner. Slightly larger than previous NSEs, the Marcella-led organization had 554 military personnel, 80 PSP personnel, and 300 CANCAP augmentees. Structurally it was similar to previous organizations and was responsible for deploying NSE Detachments to Ma'Sum Ghar, Sperwan Ghar, FOB Wilson, Camp Nathan Smith, and Kabul. Once Canada realigned forces in Kandahar Province, the NSE opened detachments at COP Shojah, and the New District Centre in Panjwayi. As the Canadian PRT drew down, the NSE also assisted with the handover of Camp Nathan Smith to the Americans. Logistics support to the OMLT was also reorganized to reduce perceptions that the mentors were second-class citizens in relationship to other units in TF Kandahar.[283] A significant shift in structure and processes from earlier NSE rotations involved the battle group which was altered to include an echelon and an administration company. That change related more to the situation on the ground, that is, the shift towards distributed patrolling in two districts instead of ranging all over Kandahar Helmand provinces, rather than adherence to logistics doctrine.[284]

The concept of support during this period involved maintaining FOB detachments as far forward as possible, particularly their maintenance teams. Moving heavy equipment back and forth to forward operating bases was anathema to Marcella, who emphasized the use of mobile repair teams. Second, Marcella and his staff were attuned to the vehicle shortage issue

and focused on minimizing truck movement while maximizing helicopter resupply. Jingle Truck support was now pooled with helicopter resupply and Combat Logistics Patrols by the staff, and artificial barriers between these resources were removed as much as possible.

This was nice in theory. By June 2010, however, contracted helicopter support was, according to LCol Marcella, "completely useless to us." The Blowtorch 61 shootdown frightened the contract Mi-17 crews, who now refused to fly west of Camp Nathan Smith. Marcella's NSE now had to move goods by ground transportation, which dramatically increased dependency on Jingle Truck contracting and, unfortunately, 2007-style Combat Logistics Patrols. Marcella, however, had a good relationship with LCol Chris Drouin at the Air Wing. The two staffs worked to maximize loads, ensuring that all aircraft were filled to capacity each flight. Ultimately, however, the NSE found itself using Combat Logistics Patrols four times as much as the previous two rotations. This, of course, significantly increased the risk to Canadian troops to IED attack.[285]

The increased use of Jingle Truck contracting had an unexpected benefit. Sometimes it took days for Jungle Trucks to enter Kandahar Air Field because of stringent security measures. A member of the NSE was tasked with getting priority treatment for 'Canadian' JT's. This involved deploying Tim Horton's coffee to the Slovakian Entry Control Point. This Canadian officer also learned Pashto so he could speak with the Afghan drivers. This led to valuable route and other intelligence data which was fed to the NSE intelligence cell and the ASIC.[286]

The largest task assigned to the NSE was to support the American influx. Any laydown of troops had to be proceeded by significant infrastructure preparation: accommodations had to be built, roads constructed, tactical infrastructure surveyed. In essence, the American contracting system, which was considered "inflexible and incapable" by the NSE, completely failed because it was far too slow for the Afghan environment. The existing Canadian contracting system, in place for several years and with substantial personal connections already in existence, was placed at the disposal of the incoming Americans by BGen Vance.[287]

A case in point involved 'life support' issues at Camp Nathan Smith. The PRT rapidly grew to over 1000 personnel, overwhelming the cooking facilities. As a result, friction between US military personnel, Canadian civilian personnel, and Canadian military personnel reached absurd proportions. In one case undisciplined American troops broke the locks off of the food freezers and helped themselves but were not held accountable by their officers. The NSE expanded dining facilities and feeding capabilities and eventually two solitudes emerged: an American DFAC and a Canadian mess. NSE contract support to the U.S. Army constituted 50% of the NSE effort from April until October 2010 when the American system finally came on line.[288]

Related to this was the provision of forward feeding detachments to areas that American forces flowed into. Seventeen additional cooks were required, ten of which were needed at FOB Frontenac for the estimated 300 Americans stationed there. NSE contracting support played a role in alleviating this very basic need. Canadian fresh feeding also increased so that less than 200 personnel were dependent on individual meal pack rations.[289]

The NSE was also involved in mentoring tasks with the Afghan National Army, particularly in the realm of material repair. Members of Maintenance Company spent one day a week with their Afghan counterparts at Camp Hero and, by their account, increased the Afghan repair capacity four fold. The concept of joint convoys was raised but was opposed by the NSE leadership because there were too many differences in rules of engagement, communications, and security.[290]

The NSE was also involved in complex recovery tasks like Operation QUICK SAND. An RAF Regiment patrol of three vehicle became bogged in what amounted to a mud soup near one of the 'rocket boxes' outside of Kandahar Air Field. ISTAR reportage noted that the enemy understood the British predicament and prepared to attack them. The RAF contemplated abandoning the vehicles and called for a JDAM strike on them, but this was denied by Regional Command (South). A TLAV sent to assist with the effort became bogged, as was a Taurus Armoured Recovery Vehicle sent to recover the TLAV. The same thing happened to an AHSVS wrecker. Finally an Afghan army excavator went in and also became bogged. The Afghan excavator, however, was able to self-recover, and dig out the Canadian AHSVS wrecker. The Taurus was freed by the AHSVS wrecker, and then both recovered the TLAV. The British vehicles eventually dug themselves out. This process took two days. Due to the coalition presence in the area, there were no rocket attacks on the airfield for nearly a week.[291]

The NSE had to fend off attempts by Regional Command (South) to restrict supply convoy movement to night. This issue was magnified by the American influx. Arguments against this policy were that it gave too much advance warning to the insurgents, there were no pattern of life indicators because the population was off the streets, and the Canadian vehicles lacked the integral explosive clearance equipment. American vehicles were equipped with small roller sets and even detectors while Canadian AHSVS vehicles did not and there were not enough EROC packages to go around. The use of night vision equipment also increased the risk of accidents.[292]

On the medical front, the Canadian-led Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit hospital now transferred to American control, and moved from the collection of faded and beaten Weatherhavens and eight-year-old plywood shacks into a modern hospital building that could have serviced any medium-sized community in Canada. The Canadian Role 2 facility in the Canadian lines near the battle group headquarters now became the repository

of non-surgical medical operations, though TF Kandahar contributed staff to the new coalition facility.[293] Finally, the Giesebrecht/Miller killings led to a re-examination of the viability of the Bison ambulance in the Afghan theatre. The Bison ambulance was deemed too vulnerable and was withdrawn from service. They were replaced with an experimental TLAV ambulance conversion in August.[294]

Conclusion

The insurgency was in serious trouble in early 2010. Unfortunately, this state of affairs could not be exploited by ISAF because of a variety of internal command issues, even though substantial numbers of American forces were pouring into Kandahar. The old problem of whether Helmand or Kandahar should be the priority effort continued. And, at every turn, the coalition effort was undermined by poor Afghan governance aggravated by poor international support to Afghan governance. Indeed, the loss of coalition credibility with the Afghans was substantial. The complete inability of the major national players to find answers to the Pakistan problem compounded the situation.

Reduced by circumstance into adopting a smaller role in events, TF Kandahar struggled to reduce its vista. At the same time, this state of affairs permitted greater synergies in Panjwayi district. Those synergies were not realized yet but held promise for the future. The extreme turbulence generated within the coalition effort and by the insurgency throughout 2010 started to stabilize by the mid-summer, in many ways through a combination of the positive impact of BGen Jon Vance and by the resilience of the Canadian soldiers under his command. TF Kandahar had one more chance to make a positive contribution before it was instructed by the Canadian Government to withdraw in 2011. BGen Dean Milner and his command team would lead that effort.

ENDNOTES

1. Confidential in-theatre discussions by the author with Canadian and American personnel (July 2010).
2. Telephone interview with Col (Ret) Daniel Ménard, (6 November 2012).
3. See Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Little America: The War within the War for Afghanistan* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2012), Chapter 8.
4. Details only started to emerge later. See "Environment in 4th BCT During Deployment was Chaotic", *Army Times* (18 April 2012); "Wife of O-6 Told to Stay Away from BCT Families", *Army Times* (11 June 2010).
5. JTF-A HQ DSR (14 January 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (22 February 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (28 February 2010).
6. TFK BUB (1 March 2010), TFK CUB (1 March 2010).
7. Adrian McNair, "Michael Yon Lays Off Canada and Bashes Spain", (8 March 2010).
8. "The First Scalp of Tarnak?" http://waronterrornews.typepad.com/ps/2011/02/tarnak-bridge-aftermath.html (2 July 2011).

9. See JTF-A HQ BUB slide (1 February–1 March 2010).
10. RAF Regiment and JDOC briefings to the author (2007, 2008 and 2009).
11. TFK POSM (1 April 2010).
12. For a fair and detailed analysis of the Tarnak Bridge incident, see http://waronterrornews.typepad.com/ps/2011/02/tarnak-bridge-aftermath.html.
13. TFK POSM (11 March 2010).
14. TFK POSM (1 April 2010).
15. This methodology appeared in the TF Kandahar synchronization meetings by April 2010 but it is likely it was being used by ISAF as a measurement of progress earlier than this. Certainly by 2011 'DSCHBE' was the standard method of measuring progress in RC (South) in its briefings.
16. TFK POSM (15 April 2010).
17. TFK INTSUM (19 January 2010).
18. TFK INTSUM (15 February 2010); TFK INTSUM (16 February 2010); TFK INTSUM (24 February 2010).
19. TFK INTSUM (14 March 2010).
20. TFK INTSUM (27 April 2010); TFK INTSUM (30 April 2010). See also TFK INTSUM (11 February 2010).
21. JTF-A HQ WSR (3–9 March 2010).
22. J2 briefing to the author (KAF, 11 July 2010).
23. JTF-A HQ DSR (29 March 2010).
24. TFK INTSUM (7 March 2010).
25. TFK INTSUM (5 March 2010).
26. TFK INTSUM (8 March 2010).
27. JTF-A HQ WSR (3–9 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (9 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (10 March 2010).
28. TFK INTSUM (13 March 2010).
29. JTF-A HQ WSR (10–16 March 2010); TFK INTSUM (14 March 2010).
30. JTF-A HQ WSR (10–16 March 2010).
31. TFK INTSUM (14 March 2010).
32. TFK INTSUM (16 March 2010).
33. JTF-A HQ DSR (17 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (24 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (5 April 2010).
34. TFK INTSUM (11 April 2010).
35. JTF-A HQ WSR (14–20 April 2010); TFK INTSUM (12 April 2010).
36. TFK INTSUM (20 April 2010); TFK INTSUM (21 April 2010); TFK INTSUM (22 April 2010); TFK INTSUM (26 April 2010).
37. JTF-A HQ WSR (10–16 March 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (7–13 April 2010).
38. JTF-A HQ WSR (24 February–2 March 2010).
39. JTF-A HQ WSR (7–24 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (2 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (4 March 2010).

40. JTF-A HQ WSR (7–13 April 2010).
41. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (17 March 2010).
42. JTF-A HQ WSR (24–30 March 2010).
43. JTF-A HQ WSR (24–30 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (9 April 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (10 April 2010).
44. JTF-A HQ DSR (21 March 2010).
45. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 April 2010).
46. TFK INTSUM (29 March 2010).
47. See Adam Medina, "Ghost Scouts role play with help from Blackhorse Troopers", http://www.aerotechnews.com.
48. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (3 March 2010).
49. JTF-A HQ DSR (15 March 2010).
50. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 March 2010); TFK INTSUM (18 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (12 April 2010).
51. TFK INTSUM (28 March 2010).
52. TFK INTSUM (5 April 2010).
53. TFK INTSUM (8 April 2010); TFK INTSUM (14 April 2010).
54. TFK INTSUM (10 March 2010); TFK INTSUM (16 March 2010).
55. JTF-A HQ DSRs (12, 13, 15 and 20 March 2010). See also Interview with LCol Ryan Jurkowski (Kingston, 19 June 2014).
56. TFK INTSUM (22 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (8 April 2010).
57. Interview with Maj Wayne Niven (Edmonton, 11 July 2012).
58. *Ibid.*
59. JTF-A HQ DSR (8 March 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (10 March 2010); 1 PPCLI D Company SITREP (8 March 2010).
60. TFK INTSUM (14 March 2010).
61. TFK INTSUM (17 March 2010); Niven interview.
62. 1 PPCLI "Operation SHER 2 POR 21–30 March 2010".
63. JTF-A HQ DSR (4 April 2010).
64. TFK INTSUM (20 April 2010).
65. TFK INTSUM (24 April 2010).
66. JTF-A HQ WSR (10–16 March 2010); TFK POSM (11 March 2010).
67. JTF-A HQ WSR (17–24 March 2010).
68. JTF-A HQ WSR (26 May–1 June 2010).
69. Operation MOSHTARAK Phase III, as we will see, was later resurrected, but at this time the Canadian planners believed that HAMKARI was the successor plan.
70. TFK O&I briefing to the author (KAF, 10 July 2010); TFK J5 briefing to the author (KAF, 15 July 2010).
71. TFK O&I briefing to the author (KAF, 10 July 2010). TFK POSM (22 April 2010).

72. JTF-A HQ WSR (14–20 April 2010).
73. JTF-A HQ WSR (19–25 May 2010); TFK O&I briefing to the author (KAF, 10 July 2010).
74. Interview with LCol Jennie Carignan (KAF, 12 July 2010).
75. *Ibid.* Note that 22 NCR was an engineering brigade headquarters that had three battalions under its command: one each from the US Army, US Air Force, and US Navy. The US Navy battalion was a Naval Construction Battalion or a SeaBee battalion.
76. TFK POSM (20 May 2010).
77. The sub-organization dealing with Sarposa prison operations was dubbed Task Force Cynthia.
78. Author's observations (Camp Nathan Smith, 17–24 July 2010).
79. TFK INTSUM (8 May 2010).
80. Interview with Col Ian Creighton (Ottawa, 21 November 2012).
81. Confidential interviews with OMLT personnel (KAF and Ma'Sum Ghar, Summer 2010).
82. Creighton interview.
83. OMLT briefing to the author (KAF, 10 August 2010).
84. JTF-A HQ WSR (14–20 April 2010).
85. OMLT briefing to the author (KAF, 10 August 2010).
86. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (May, June and July 2010).
87. OMLT briefing to the author (KAF, 10 August 2010); Creighton interview. Creighton notes that a re-roled American artillery battalion operating in northern Arghandab took well to partnering and developed a strong relationship with the Afghans. Other American units tended to use Afghan troops as the "Afghan face" to their operations and engage in the letter of the law not the spirit. To be fair, there were Canadian units that operated on both ends of the same spectrum.
88. OMLT briefing to the author (KAF, 10 August 2010).
89. *Ibid.* See also Creighton interview.
90. Creighton interview. See also JTF-A HQ WSR (12–18 May 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (6–12 June 2010).
91. Confidential interviews with OMLT personnel (KAF and Ma'Sum Ghar, Summer 2010).
92. Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2010), pages 350–351.
93. *Ibid.*, pages 350–355. David E. Sanger, *Confront and Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars and Surprising Use of American Power* (New York: Random House, 2012), pages 33–36. See Stanley McChrystal, *My Share of the Task: A Memoir* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013), chapters 16 and 17.
94. Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame* (New York: Vintage, 2013), page 163.
95. Sanger, *Confront and Conceal*, pages 54–55.
96. Distilled from TFK POSMs (May-July 2010).
97. *Ibid.*
98. Interview with Col Conrad Mialkowski (Ottawa, 25 October 2012).
99. Mialkowski interview.

100. Interview with Col Simon Hetherington (KAF, 9 July 2010); Niven interview; Mialkowski interview; Maloney discussions with MGen Nick Carter (Camp Nathan Smith, 22 July 2010).

101. The TFK J5 staff leaned toward the indigenous model that McChrystal appears to endorse in his memoir (*My Share of the Task*, pages 308–309), but the J2 staff and BGen Vance believed that the insurgency in Kandahar Province had mutually supporting rural, urban and external components.

102. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 February 2010).

103. TFK J2 briefing to the author (11 July 2010).

104. *Ibid.*

105. JTF-A HQ WSR (24 February-2 March 2010).

106. JTF-A HQ WSR (21-27 April 2010).

107. These figures are distilled from JTF-A HQ WSRs (March–July 2010).

108. Carignan interview; TFK POSM (15 July 2010); JTF-A DSR (1 April 2010).

109. Interview with Maj Gord Ohlke (Kingston, 22 March 2013). See also OC All Source Intelligence Centre (Forward) Diary notes (24–31 July 2010).

110. JTF-A HQ WSR (3–9 March 2010).

111. JTF-A HQ WSR (24–30 March 2010).

112. JTF-A HQ WSR (24–30 March 2010).

113. TFK INTSUM (28 April 2010).

114. TFK INTSUM (8 May 2010).

115. TFK INTSUM (17 May 2010). Notably the Engineer Construction Squadron uncovered a scheme in Kandahar City where landowners in District 7 were threatened in order to get them to sell their land. Ahmad Wali Karzai would acquire the land and then sell it to the government to build a market in which he in turn was part of the approval process. Interview with Maj Bryan Mialkowsky (KAF, 11 August 2010).

116. TFK INTSUM (21 May 2010).

117. TFK INTSUM (28 May 2010).

118. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 May 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (4 May 2010).

119. TFK INTSUM (9 May 2010); TFK INTSUM (11 May 2010).

120. Paula Broadwell, *All In: The Education of General David Petraeus* (New York: Penguin Press, 2012), page 45.

121. JTF-A HQ WSR (20–26 January 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (27 January–2 February 2010).

122. TFK INTSUM (15 May 2010).

123. TFK INTSUM (16 May 2010); TFK INTSUM (20 May 2010); TFK INTSUM (26 May 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (27 May 2010).

124. JTF-A HQ DSR (3 May 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (4 May 2010).

125. JTF-A HQ DSR (13 May 2010).

126. JTF-A HQ DSR (16 May 2010).

127. JTF-A HQ DSR (9 May 2010).

128. JTF-A HQ DSR (6 May 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (15 May 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (21 May 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (26 May 2010).
129. JTF-A HQ WSR (19–25 May 2010); TFK INTSUM (27 May 2010).
130. Mialkowski interview.
131. TFK INTSUM (15 May 2010); TFK INTSUM (19 May 2010).
132. JTF-A HQ DSR (4 May 2010).
133. JTF-A HQ DSR (8 May 2010).
134. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (11, 14 and 18 May 2010).
135. JTF-A HQ DSR (19 May 2010).
136. JTF-A HQ DSR (13 May 2010).
137. Mialkowski interview; TFK INTSUM (21 May 2010).
138. JTF-A HQ WSR (19–24 May 2010).
139. Telephone interview with Maj Eleanor Taylor (24 February 2013).
140. JTF-A HQ DSR (14 May 2010).
141. Taylor interview.
142. JTF-A HQ DSR (13 May 2010).
143. JTF-A HQ DSR (16 May 2010).
144. TFK INTSUM (13 May 2010).
145. Taylor interview.
146. JTF-A HQ DSR (25 May 2010).
147. JTF-A HQ DSR (26 May 2010). See also Mialkowski interview.
148. JTF-A HQ DSR (28 May 2010).
149. TFK INTSUM (1 June 2010); TFK INTSUM (2 June 2010).
150. "1 RCR BG Recce Platoon, TF 1-10 Op ATHENA Roto 9 Close Observation Capability — Tactical Employment", (21 April 2011).
151. EOD Squadron briefing to the author (KAF, 1 August 2010).
152. *Ibid.*
153. *Ibid.*
154. *Ibid.*
155. *Ibid.*
156. Hetherington interview.
157. Hetherington interview.
158. *Ibid.*
159. *Ibid.*

160. Interview with MGen Jonathan Vance (Ottawa, 11 December 2012).
161. *Ibid.* See also interview with BGen Jonathan Vance (KAF, 12 July 2010).
162. *Ibid.*
163. *Ibid.*
164. *Ibid.*
165. Taylor interview.
166. JTF-A HQ DSRs (6, 8 and 14 June 2010); TFK INTSUM (14 June 2010).
167. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 June 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (12 June 2010).
168. JTF-A HQ DSR (4 June 2010).
169. TFK INTSUM (5 June 2010); TFK INTSUM (7 June 2010).
170. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (June 2010).
171. TFK INTSUM (5 June 2010).
172. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 June 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (6 June 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (7 June 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (2–8 June 2010).
173. JTF-A HQ DSR (7 June 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (12 June 2010).
174. JTF-A HQ DSR (13 June 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (14 June 2010); TFK INTSUM; Mialkowski interview (15 June 2010).
175. TFK INTSUM (20 June 2010).
176. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (16–20 June 2010).
177. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (20–26 June 2010). See also JTF-A HQ DSR (1 July 2010).
178. JTF-A HQ DSR (27 June 2010). The author arrived in Panjwayi district soon after this event and during discussions there was a strong belief among Canadian personnel that the Bison was deliberately targeted because it was an ambulance.
179. Author's observation of a discussion during a Commander's Update Briefing, Kandahar Air Field, 2 August 2010. One of the most disconcerting aspects of this incident were some personnel who essentially gave the Taliban the benefit of the doubt and claimed that the Taliban did not know they were targeting an ambulance. This type of denial was reminiscent of the tone of those who argued that the Taliban "accidentally" killed Glyn Berry in 2006.
180. Mialkowski interview.
181. JTF-A HQ WSR (8–14 June 2010).
182. *Ibid.*
183. Vance interview.
184. TFK POSM (1 July 2010).
185. TFK POSM (15 July 2010).
186. TFK POSM (22 July 2010).
187. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs and WSRs (June 2010).
188. *Ibid.*
189. *Ibid.*

190. Michael Hastings, *The Operators: The Wild and Terrifying Inside Story of America's War in Afghanistan* (New York: Random House, 2012), page 321.
191. Broadwell, *All In*, page 27.
192. *Ibid.*, pages 49–50.
193. JTF-A HQ WSR (2–8 June 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (8–14 June 2010).
194. TFK INTSUM (17 June 2010).
195. Compiled from TFK DSRs and INTSUMs (June 2010).
196. TFK INTSUM (20 June 2010).
197. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs and INSTUMS (July 2010).
198. JTF-A HQ DSR (26 June 2010), JTF-A HQ DSR (29 June 2010), TFK INSTUM (6 July 2010).
199. JTF-A HQ DSR (16 June 2010).
200. TFK INTSUM (7 July 2010).
201. JTF-A HQ DSR (9 July 2010).
202. The author was at Task Force Kandahar Headquarters when this event took place.
203. Distilled from JTF-A HQ WSRs and DSRs (July–August 2010).
204. JTF-A HQ DSR (10 August 2010).
205. JTF-A HQ WSR (10–16 August 2010).
206. TFK INTSUM (1 July 2010).
207. JTF-A HQ DSR (3 July 2010). See also JTF-A HQ WSR (29 June–5 July 2010).
208. As told to the author by MWO Stu Hartwell (FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, 2 August 2010).
209. JTF-A HQ DSR (10 July 2010).
210. Taylor interview.
211. JTF-A HQ DSR (7 July 2010), TFK INTSUM (16 July 2010).
212. JTF- HQ DSR (6 July 2010).
213. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (July 2010).
214. Smyth interview.
215. JTF-A HQ DSR (26 July 2010).
216. Author's observations at a Commander's Update Briefing (KAF, 26 July 2010).
217. JTF-A HQ DSR (30 August 2010).
218. The soldiers involved in this engagement and others like it described them in detail to the author at FOB Ma'Sum Ghar (6 August 2010).
219. JTF-A HQ DSR (27 July 2010).
220. JTF-A HQ DSR (30 July 2010).
221. TFK INTSUM (4 July 2010).

222. JTF-A HQ DSR (4 July 2010), JTF-A HQ DSR (5 July 2010).
223. JTF-A HQ DSR (7 July 2010).
224. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 July 2010).
225. JTF-A HQ WSR (13–19 July 2010), JTF-A HQ DSR (17 July 2010).
226. TFK INTSUM (18 July 2010).
227. TFK INTSUM (21 July 2010).
228. Vance interview.
229. The author was present for several meetings related to Operation BAEXEI (July 2010).
230. Vance interview.
231. I Company briefing to the author (Camp Nathan Smith, 19 July 2010).
232. Author's observations (KAF and Camp Nathan Smith, July–August 2010).
233. Mialkowski interview; JTF-A HQ DSR (22 July 2010); Commander's Update Briefing (KAF, 24 July 2010).
234. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 June 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (5 July 2010).
235. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 July 2010).
236. The author was in-theatre when this event took place and was present during the commander's update briefing when the details were briefed. This included a picture of Baran post-tea pot beating.
237. Mialkowski interview. See also TFK INTSUM (15 July 2010); TFK INTSUM (26 July 2010).
238. JTF-A HQ WSR (27 July–2 August 2010).
239. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 July 2010).
240. JTF-A HQ DSR (19 July 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (20 July 2010).
241. TFK INTSUM (1 August 2010).
242. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (August 2010).
243. The author was on BLOWTORCH 61, disembarked right before it was shot down and observed the proceedings from the PGSS aerostat feed in the command post at FOB Ma'Sum Ghar.
244. The author observed this engagement from the Ma'Sum Ghar command post.
245. Author's observations from FOB Ma'Sum Ghar (August 2010).
246. TFK INTSUM (11 August 2010).
247. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs and SIGACTS (August 2010).
248. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 August 2010).
249. JTF-A HQ DSR (1 August 2010).
250. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 August 2010).
251. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 August 2010).
252. JTF-A HQ DSR (20 August 2010).
253. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs and SIGACTs (August 2010).

254. *Ibid.*
255. Author's observations on receiving a tour of Recce Squadron positions in Panjwayi District (August 2010).
256. JTF-A HQ DSR (9 August 2010).
257. JTF-A HQ WSR (3–9 August 2010).
258. JTF-A HQ DSR (8 August 2010).
259. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs and SIGACTs (August 2010).
260. TFK INTSUM (22 August 2010).
261. JTF-A HQ WSR (27 July–2 August 2010).
262. Author's discussions with District Support Team personnel (Panjwayi District, August 2010).
263. POST SITREP (1 August 2010).
264. Briefing to the author (KAF, 12 August 2010).
265. The author was near the impact of the first rocket and then proceeded to the TFK TOC and observed proceedings from there.
266. *Ibid.*
267. *Ibid.*
268. Briefing to the author (KAF, 12 August 2010).
269. It was not well thought out *vis-à-vis* effects on Hold operations in eastern Panjwayi District, either. See Vance interview.
270. Author's notes on a discussion between BGen Vance and MGen Carter (26 July 2010).
271. *Ibid.*
272. *Ibid.*
273. *Ibid.*
274. *Ibid.*
275. *Ibid.*
276. Creighton interview; Mialkowski interview; JTF-A HQ DSR (20 August 2010).
277. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 August 2010).
278. JTF-A HQ DSR (25 August 2010).
279. JTF-A HQ WSR (10–16 August 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (17–23 August 2010).
280. TFK INTSUM (13 August 2010).
281. TFK INTSUM (19 August 2010).
282. Creighton interview.
283. Interview with LCol Tim Marcella (12 April 2013).
284. NSE briefing to the author (KAF, 15 July 2010).
285. Marcella interview.

286. *Ibid.*

287. *Ibid.*

288. *Ibid.* See also author's observations at Camp Nathan Smith (July 2010).

289. "JTF-AFG Support Review" (26 March 2008); "TF 1-10 NSE (R9) End of Tour Brief" (19 January 2011).

290. Marcella interview.

291. NSE briefing to the author.

292. Marcella interview.

293. Author's observations (KAF, July 2010).

294. TFK POSM (29 July 2010).

END-GAME FOR TASK FORCE KANDAHAR:

SEPTEMBER 2010–JUNE 2011

Introduction

The final TF Kandahar rotations in the last eight months of the Canadian Army's tenure in Kandahar took place during a period of dramatic change. The tense drama of the summer of 2010 gave way to a climactic series of operations in the fall, followed by an almost anti-climactic period of relative stability lasting well into 2011. At first glance, it appeared as though the drop off in enemy activity in the fall was cyclical. The Pakistan-based fighters returned to their bases, re-armament activities took place, rockets were sporadically flung at Kandahar Air Field and so on. Some argued that the enemy was waiting for Canada to depart and had merely backed off before coming back in force during the Spring. As the weeks and months wore on, however, it was evident that there was in fact a substantial alteration in the scale of enemy activity taking place. The insurgency was forced to re-evaluate its activities based on what had occurred across southern Afghanistan in 2010. There were additional but hard to define pressures on the other side of the Durand Line related to the insurgent leadership's will to continue the fight. The insurgency in the Canadian area of operations was even less capable of the types of operations it had employed over the past four years and its local leaders struggled to adapt yet again to coalition methods and activities.

By the early summer of 2011, Canadian troops and Afghan civilians could drive on a paved road from Forward Operating Base Ma'sum Ghar to a forward operating base in Zangabad in eight minutes, whereas before Zangabad was could only be accessed by a deliberate operation down an isolated winding dirt road riddled with IEDs. The new road was ultimately extended all the way to Mushan, where commerce flourished in the bazaar once again. Canadian troops could operate in coordinated partnership with the Afghan army, the Afghan national civil order police, and special operations forces. They would be accompanied by engaged and comparatively effective district leadership. And they would bring a host of locally-tailored security and development programs designed to address grievances and assist local religious authorities. An Afghan brigade, with Canadian mentorship, was able to conduct comparatively independent operations. None of this was possible the previous summer, let alone in the earlier years of Canadian Army operations in Afghanistan.

That state of affairs, however, did not look possible in early September 2010. 1 RCR Battle Group was challenged in its dealings with the twin canker sores of Nakhonay and Chalghowr. Operations were not seen to be feasible west of the 28 Easting in the Horn of Panjwayi, which remained an insurgent base area pumping supplies and expertise to forward IED construction facilities in Kenjakak and elsewhere. There were IED's everywhere, or so it seemed. At the very least, operations in central and eastern Panjwayi district continued to keep the enemy from focusing efforts on Dand district, though the enemy continued in their efforts to make opportunistic low-level inroads. There they were frustrated by a combination of TF 1-71 Cav and the great strides in governance and development efforts that made Dand a model district.

Handing Off from Vance to Milner: The New Task Force Afghanistan, September 2010

It was now time for BGen Jon Vance and the former Ménard-led headquarters staff to depart. In mid-September 2010 BGen Dean Milner and his headquarters conducted a relief in place and set about completing the final months of the mission. TF Kandahar headquarters under Milner experienced a number of structural changes in keeping with the reduced and more concentrated nature of the mission. The incoming battle group and OMLT were now based solely in Panjwayi and Dand. In Kandahar City there was still a protection platoon and a Military Advisor at Camp Nathan Smith (LCol Louis Cyr) but for all intents and purposes the PRT ceased to have a significant relationship to TF Kandahar. ASIC (Forward) was eventually withdrawn. The Stabilization Companies were dissolved.

CIMIC and PSYOPS were re-focused away from operational-level activities and towards supporting battle group operations in Panjwayi district. 'Operational-level' PSYOPS was folded into Influence Activities which was now part of an expanded J9 in the headquarters led by LCol Marcel McNicholl. McNicholl was also Commanding Officer of Brigade Troops which now consisted of the ScanEagle SUAV detachment; the non-infantry remains of Stab A; the JTACs, the Fire Support Coordination Centre, and the Air Space Coordination Centre at the TF Kandahar operations centre. The two OCC-D's, also reported to the J9.[1]

The J5 section under LCol Roger Cotton handled Afghan national security force issues and operations analysis. The need for better measurements of effectiveness on the progress of the Afghan police and army, something that lapsed under the previous headquarters, and the shift to partnering and the decline of the OMLT, now had to be reinvigorated with a vengeance. The reporting demands by higher ISAF headquarters on these matters justified the significant increase in J5 capacity. Within weeks, the daily and weekly reporting improved and ANSF development was much easier to track for the non-cognoscenti.

Photo Credit: DND AR2010-0306-120

With the reduction of Canadian battle-space in Kandahar Province, BGen Dean Milner focussed on building relationships with district-level Afghan leaders, particularly District Governor Haji Baran of Panjwayi District.

This new schema consisted of the 'Plan, Train, Capacity, Sustain' functional progression, and was now applied to everything TF Kandahar's units did with Afghan security forces.[2]

The J5 also provided valuable operations analysis. The jettisoning of Effects Based Operations by the Thompson headquarters back in 2009 did not mean that statistical feedback was completely useless. The J5 noted that Regional Command (South) moved company-sized icons around on maps and assumed that certain activities were taking place: this was referred to as "Sprinkling KLE dust" and "Stability dust" on the map, but it was not clear exactly what effect this actually had below the sub-unit level. "Money is a weapons system" became the mantra in various headquarters but when the idea was challenged, it was difficult to prove how effective it was. The J5 examined such aspects of the campaign and provided feedback into the J9 world.[3] In time the J5 shifted to mission transition, that is, closing down TF Kandahar and handing off to BGen Chuck Lamarre's Mission Transition Task Force.

The significant change in philosophy during this rotation was that CIMIC and the other 'non-kinetic' organizations in TF Kandahar were now completely focused on influence activity, not development activity. As CIMIC leader Major Dan Lamoureaux delineated it, there was Feel Good CIMIC at the PRT and Combat CIMIC in TF Kandahar.[4] There was still a TF Kandahar Development Advisor, in this case Anne Lavender. Lavender had experience in Kandahar working for CIDA at the PRT trying to rationalize various reporting schema back in 2010. However, she was hampered by the unresponsive nature of communications with the other government departments at the PRT. As a result, the District Support Teams in Panjwayi and Dand reported to TF Kandahar, not the PRT, and were still at this point working out what their relationship to the new super PRT, the US-led Regional Platform (South), was supposed to be. They also had good working relationships with the J9. Political Advisor Colin Lake had a decreasing role to play as things wound down but found a niche in sorting out relationships with Regional Platform (South). The Representative of Canada in Kandahar, the vaunted RoCK, was now seen as "fading away" as "Canadian influence vanished."[5]

The attitude that developed for the last Canadian rotation can be summed up thus: "We are past development, the future ends on 1 June 2011." The focus was on tactical effects in order to reduce the effectiveness of the enemy in the upcoming summer 2011 fighting season so that an effective relief in place could take place with the incoming American brigade. Projects were not necessarily designed for lasting effect: "[We were] going to do everything the enemy doesn't want us to do." And that meant, among other things, constructing and manning schools, building roads, and implementing irrigation improvements.[6]

The general concept was to place CIMIC and development pressure in areas to get the enemy to respond to them with their limited resources: and then increase the Canadian-Afghan response 200% to counter them. Then move to another area and repeat the process. This ideally would force the enemy to spread his limited information operations (positive and negative) and fledgling development capacity very thinly. TF Kandahar would then rotate its priorities to keep the insurgency off balance.[7]

Religious engagement was part of this schema. Radio was one methodology, providing every form of support to the mosques was another. The Kandahar Ulema Shura was examined as a venue but, as it turned out, the KUS never really recovered from the 2005-2007 period where its moderate members were selectively assassinated. That said there was now a KUS magazine, and radio talk shows examining the religious aspects of the life, the universe, and the insurgency. Wheelchair repair and basic agricultural training at the district centres were other projects that had effects where the Taliban could not respond to match them. TF Kandahar under Milner retained an entity dubbed "The Frat House" where influence activities were brainstormed with both Canadian and Afghan advisors. In the Milner-led

TF Kandahar headquarters, there was a dramatic improvement in how influence activities were understood and integrated into operations compared to the tentative and minimalistic efforts of the Ménard-led headquarters.[8]

The push for a new reintegration framework for so-called Tier II Taliban fighters at the national level in Afghanistan had by the fall of 2010 produced a slew of partially-digested programs. This was considered a major weakness in the overall ISAF effort and it would not bear significant fruit during the remainder of Canada's tenure. TF Kandahar kept an eye on it in any event. In general, cash-for-work programs in the districts handled by the Canadian engineers kept more potential Tier II Taliban off the streets than the baroque concepts coming out of American think tanks seeking an audience in Kabul did.[9]

On the final rotation of TF Kandahar, the Task Force Engineer Regiment played the lead role. Commanded by LCol Mark Misener, it comprised the Engineer Support Squadron (formerly the Engineer Support Unit) led by Maj Pascal Blanchette; the Engineer Construction Squadron, itself made up of the Construction Management Organization and the Specialist Engineer Team, under 2007 alumna Maj Barbara Honig; the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Squadron (formerly the Counter-IED Squadron) led by Maj Benjamin Aho; and the Engineer Regiment Reconnaissance Troop, a new sub-unit formed to conduct project survey and verification operations. The EROC people and the combat engineers of the Field Squadron remained part of the battle group.[10] Maj Honig and the Engineer Construction Squadron worked in close cooperation with Maj Lamoureux and his CIMIC teams in the communities of Panjwayi District, which "CIDA and DFAIT did not like at all."[11]

The anomaly was that the Specialist Engineer Team remained at Camp Nathan Smith for some time despite the fact that it belonged to the ECS. The existence, location of and control over the SET became a significant issue between TF Kandahar and the other Canadian government departments and ultimately the matter went all the way up to Cabinet for adjudication. CIDA still wanted to play in the larger provincial development game with its projects, many of which remained of dubious value. The SET's higher-level American equivalent was part of 22 Naval Construction Regiment. CIDA could not access 22 NCR's money, resources, and contracting capacity, so they wanted to use TF Kandahar's money and capabilities. By this time, there was no Canadian Army area of operations outside of Dand and Panjwayi. The TF Kandahar priorities were operations in those districts. Elements in TF Kandahar viewed CIDA influence over the SET as a situation where "CIDA and DFAIT get the credit if it works, and the Canadian Forces gets the blame if it doesn't." An extreme example of the pettiness that developed was when CIDA threatened to sue Department of National Defence over the removal of fire extinguishers from Camp Nathan Smith as it was turned over to the Americans, which apparently put CIDA personnel at risk according to Canadian workplace safety guidelines.[12]

Coordination

As we have seen with previous rotations, the danger that planning could become discombobulated during multiple offset reliefs in place was high. The September–November 2010 changeover was one such period in that it had numerous and even conflicting moving parts. 1 RCR Battle Group under LCol Conrad Mialkowski was, by the fall of 2010, implementing a plan formulated in conjunction with the Vance-led TF Kandahar headquarters which itself had been commanded by BGen Ménard, who had a very different concept of operations. At the same time, Vance worked with Maj Gen Nick Carter at Regional Command (South) to stabilize the situation in Kandahar province after several unexpected command changes and after the significant inflow of American troops into the province in the summer. The issue was this: Vance and the former Ménard-led TF Kandahar headquarters were scheduled to rotate out in mid-September and be replaced with a TF Kandahar headquarters commanded by BGen Dean Milner. Mialkowski and 1 RCR Battle Group was scheduled to be relieved by LCol Michel-Henri St-Louis and the 1 R22eR Battle Group in late November. The OMLT, as we have seen, was in the process of shifting away from partnering and going back to mentoring, while at the same time the unit rotated between Col Ian Creighton's organization and one commanded by Colonel Hercule Gosselin in November. There were going to be more Afghan security forces to coordinate with, and there was now a new 1-205 Brigade commander, Brig Gen Habibi. Then Carter's Regional Command (South) headquarters was going to be replaced by an American-dominated Regional Command (South) headquarters in November. That headquarters was going to be commanded by Maj Gen James Terry, who had been the operations officer for 10th Mountain Division back in 2006 when CTF AEGIS was under its command.

To complicate matters further, there were the fall 2010 Afghan provincial elections. Operations still had to be designed to support voter registration, polling station location, and security on the day of the election. Then units had to create their own plans. There were significant implications. First, the incoming OMLT and P-OMLT had to substantially adjust their organizations and concepts of operation to handle the new Afghan organizations that were moving into the Canadian area of operations. Second, 1 R22eR Battle Group was going to be implementing a plan conceptualized by Carter, agreed to by Vance and Carter, and then commanded by Milner, but then coordinated with an American-led headquarters that had its own campaign plan. Third, the battle space in Panjwayi and Dand districts was going to be flooded with almost two brigades' worth of troops: the Canadian battle group; the Canadian OMLT and P-OMLT; TF 1-71 in Dand; three Afghan army kandaks; an Afghan National Civil Order Police kandak; and American SOF mentors for the ANCOP kandak. Those troops all required infrastructure before they could even deploy.

The immense effort required to make all of these moving parts mesh fell on the shoulders of the staffs as well as the commanders, but in TF Kandahar it was LCol Maurice 'Moe' Poitras, LCol Doug Claggett, and LCol Tod Strickland who confronted these challenging issues. It is only through exceptional interpersonal relationships and trust that all of these parts meshed and that this complex mechanism was put in motion towards a successful conclusion.

TF Kandahar's plan to stabilize the situation in Panjwayi was called Operation MATIN AZIM. 1 RCR Battle Group was to set the conditions so that the Afghan troops could flow in during the fall. MATIN AZIM was worked out jointly with Habibi's 1-205 Brigade. The Carter-led Regional Command (South) headquarters worked with TF Kandahar to develop another plan called BAAWAR, which was aimed at re-taking and occupying the Horn of Panjwayi. Operation BAAWAR involved TF Kandahar and 1-205 Brigade in Panjwayi, and the American CTF Strike in Zharey district. The Canadian part of BAAWAR was dubbed Operation PASS RAFTAN. Operation PASS RAFTAN was developed in coordination with 1-205 Brigade, with Canadian OMLT mentors playing a significant role in that coordination effort. BAAWAR and PASS RAFTAN were planned while 1 RCR Battle Group was still in-theatre but would be implemented by 1 R22eR Battle Group once they conducted the relief-in-place.[13]

The new incoming Regional Command (South) headquarters under Maj Gen Terry kept a close eye on these evolutions starting in July 2010. This headquarters had a significant Canadian component, specifically because Terry requested it. His deputy commanding general was Canadian BGen André Corbould, who selected a variety of TF ORION alumni like LCol Mason Stalker as well as highly-experienced staff officers like LCol Acton Kilby and LCol Mike Hewitt to fill positions in the stabilization and engineering branches of the headquarters. This headquarters was working on the Unified Implementation Plan, a five-year plan for Regional Command (South). There was no conflict between this work and what was happening in Panjwayi district in late 2010, as interpersonal connections ensured that any issue was rapidly deconflicted. Terry's Regional Command (South) headquarters to its credit was not interested in micromanaging events in Panjwayi at this time.[14]

On the battle group front, LCol St-Louis and his staff had exceptionally good relations with Miakowski's 1 RCR Battle Group and were up to date on the myriad of changes taking place. Though their tactical recce was temporarily marred by the Chinook helicopter shoot down in August, the incoming sub-unit commanders clearly understood the current operating environment.[15]

The Afghan-Canadian component of the plans was crucial. On the police side, there remained serious deficiencies in leveraging Canadian influence with the Afghans at the provincial level. The district-level police issues were profound and governance-related.

In these matters TF Kandahar had virtually no measurably effective assistance from the other Canadian entities in Kandahar and none from those in Kabul.

The Canadian Army–Afghan National Army relationship was in significantly different shape, particularly after mid-September. In this realm Canada was fortunate to have BGen Dean Milner in command. Milner's tenure as TF Kandahar commander was significantly different from his predecessors. His responsibilities were the same but directed at a much narrower geographical area and with less autonomy compared with previous TF Kandahar rotations. His span of manoeuvre in provincial power circles was much more restricted now that the Army was out of that game, a situation that was particularly affected after Ménard's changes at the PRT. Vance had stabilized the situation to give Milner firmer footing when he got on the ground. Rather than trying to operate as if it were 2006 or 2009, Milner saw that his key role was not to launch independent brigade-sized operations but to leverage his personality and command position with the Afghans to ensure that all of the other moving parts already in play meshed as effectively as they could under the circumstances. He did not try to reinvent the wheel. In doing so he developed a close relationship with Brigadier General Habibi, cultivated Haji Baran when possible in Panjwayi, and supported Nazek in building Dand on every front, knowing that the psychological momentum established there had to be maintained.[16]

The first stage, however, was to continue to stabilize Panjwayi district with 1 RCR Battle Group and assist in establishing the laydown for the incoming Afghan forces. Until Milner and his team were fully deployed, this was Vance's brief.

Stabilizing Panjwayi was easier said than done but the situation improved on a weekly basis. The hotspots in the district remained the Sperwan Ghar area, Nakhonay, and Chalghowr. The 28 Easting approximated a traditional forward line of own troops, but there was increased insurgent infiltration across Route Brown. Nakhonay was gripped by the Canadian and Afghan troops there but were hampered by the lack of effective police which in turn limited the flow of local information. Chalghowr remained an insurgent irritant because of its geographically central position between Malajat, Dand, and eastern Panjwayi. One important aspect of the situation was a major raid down in Spin Boldak that captured almost all of the crucial IED components destined for insurgent groups operating in Panjwayi district. The number of IED attacks dropped off in September.[17]

Vance and Mialkowski focused on screening off Nakhonay first. As LCol Mialkowski recalled:

> We're going to lock that place down. We're going to put four gates on it. We're going to have rolling patrols. Me and, like, 3.5 tons of barbed wire. The new attitude for Nakhonay's inhabitants was "Sayonara, suckers." We have all this money, and we're now going to invest

it in Salavat. We're going to throw money at Mohajerin, Panjsher. We're going to do it in Fathollah. And we're going to do it close enough so they can see.[18]

The recalcitrant and reluctant Pakistani contractor handling the UNOPS road (that is, Lake Effect) paving project told the battle group he would return now that summer fighting season was ending and complete Lake Effect. "And we said, 'Yaah, and you're gonna pave roads in here, here and here.' 'No problem. What about Nakhonay?' And we said, 'Screw Nakhonay.'…We lost ten Canadian lives in Nakhonay to no benefit. To nothing. To nothing but sheer frustration."[19]

Major Taylor's Charles Company over in Sperwan Ghar was by this time flooded with enemy activity. Word was out that there would be a coalition offensive against the Horn of Panjwayi and, by the pattern of enemy activity in the area, it appeared as though they were trying to pre-empt or otherwise disrupt any moves on the part of the coalition. Indeed, the majority of reported enemy activity in Panjwayi district in September revolved around the communities surrounding the forward operating base, and as usual, the Route Brown-Route Hyena connection. (see Figure 8-1 and 8-1a).

There was a large number of significant events east of Route Brown, which was unusual, and indicated substantial insurgent infiltration of that area. On 30 August, for example, an Afghan army patrol hit a radio-controlled IED and when the Afghans responded with a quick reaction force, it was hit with an ambush. The Canadian platoon on duty took fire on the base as well. A variety of surveillance systems on the hill picked up enemy movement and these targets were engaged with a pair of F-18s using gun runs and GBU-12 bombs. The Canadian artillery battery opened up with 20 rounds of 81mm mortar on those trying to get away.[20]

Charles Company pushed out patrols into the communities and they uncovered cache after cache. During the exfiltration of one patrol, an OH-58D Kiowa Warrior that was observing the operation came under anti-aircraft fire from a heavy machine gun. Afghan army resupply and contractor convoys started getting hit on Route Brown. On all occasions Charles Company was able to call in fast air support against the ambush parties. In one instance LAV III and Coyote 25mm fire was used from the base against small groups of insurgents skirting compounds along Route Brown. Snipers were brought in to take out IED emplacers and engaged them when they could.[21]

As an adjunct to the upcoming Operation MATIN AZIM, Charles Company surged into the Sperwan area on 15-16 September. This move appeared to have displaced the small enemy groups in that area to the zone west of Route Brown. Insurgent small arms fire was now directed against Sperwan Ghar from the southwest and the west instead of from the north. TF Kandahar did not yet have the ability to project force west of the

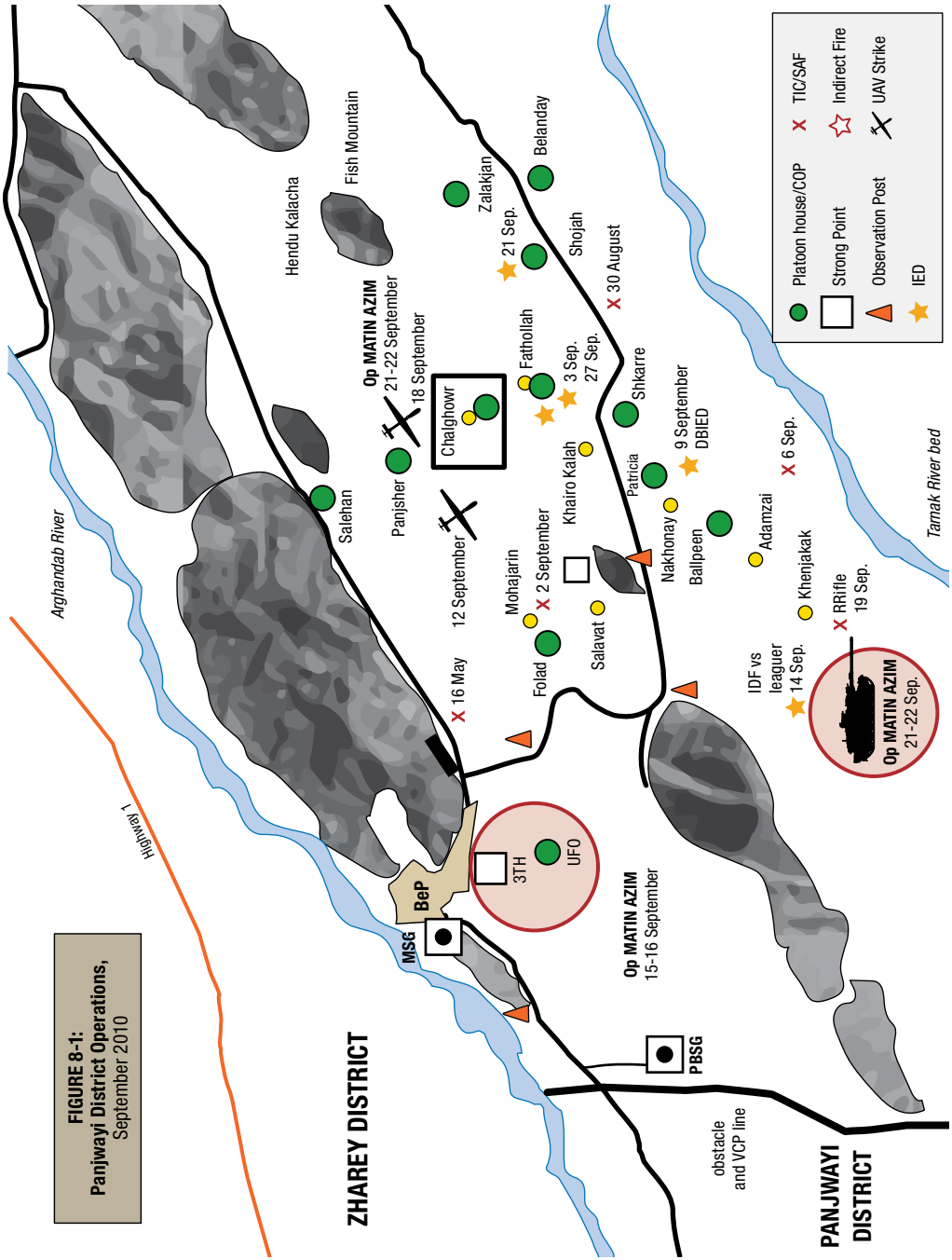

Figure 8-1: Panjwayi District Operations, September 2010

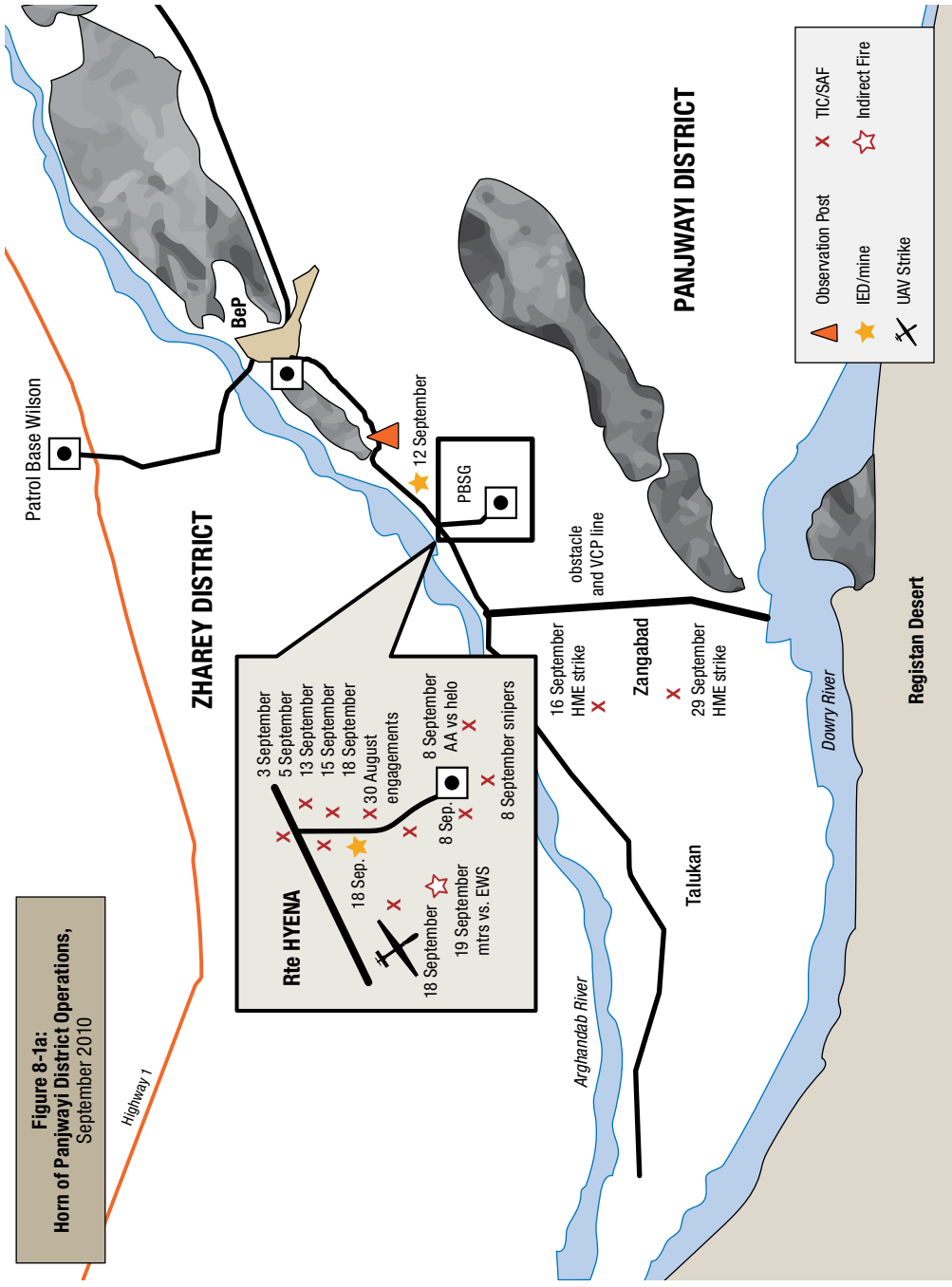

Figure 8-1a: Horn of Panjwayi Operations, September 2010

28 Easting, but to give the enemy something to think about, TF Kandahar authorized two strikes into the Zangabad area based on ISTAR reportage. A compound known to have been a homemade explosive production facility was hit with an airstrike on 15 September. Two weeks later, ISTAR resources spotted homemade explosive production in a field and Canadian M-777 guns were brought to bear, destroying the drying facility and killing those involved in the activity.[22]

The next series of operations was dubbed MATIN AZIM. There were several objectives. The first was to clear three areas: Haji Habibollah; Kenjakak; and Chalghowr. The second was to establish and occupy tactical infrastructure so that incoming Afghan and Canadian units could adjust for the Horn of Panjwayi operations. The third was to establish an obstacle belt consisting of ditches and barbed wire along with access control points in selective locations to frustrate enemy movement and generate 'breathing room' for the Hold in the three cleared areas.[23]

TF Kandahar wanted to generate several effects with MATIN AZIM. As LCol Mialkowski put it, "We're going to force you to use these checkpoints, or we're going to force you into the Reg Desert." With the Recon Company for the 1-205 Brigade situated at the bottom point of Khebari Ghar and with the tank squadron roving about between there and Nakhonay, and Recce Squadron screening on Route Lake Effect, this was now possible. "Now, you can get a motorcycle through, but we didn't care. He's not carrying, like, 200 pounds of HME. It's the cars, the little vans, the little trucks. So we closed every crossing. We'd wire it. We forced people to use legit roads."[24]

The engineering effort for this portion of MATIN AZIM took about a month. The first move was to put a ditch in west of Route Brown and establish better access control on Routes Brown and Hyena. Combined with Charles Company operations, this reduced enemy activity east of BROWN.[25]

There was concern within CIMIC circles and in Charles Company that an obstacle belt along Route Brown would alienate the population because it would split the communities like Cyprus or Berlin. However, after the anti-tank ditches, wire and motorcycle blocks went in, the population approached Charles Company and thanked them for providing security. Some even wanted the obstacle belt and checkpoints moved west beyond the 28 Easting and many wondered why the works had not been done before. In other words, the psychological impact of physical obstacles contributed to increasing the sense of security. The enemy still probed and still tried to lay IEDs, but he was attenuated just enough to give Charles Company and the population breathing room. IED finds went up. As they did, the enemy mounted more ineffective 'shoot n' scoot' small arms attacks against the checkpoints.[26]

The next phase of MATIN AZIM was to surge Major Steve Noel and I Company into the Haji Habibollah area south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi on 15 September where they manned an observation post at UFO Hill and temporarily occupied the deserted school complex next to it in Nejat. There was a burst of small arms fire at the start against Three Tank Hill and OP School near the new district centre, but once I Company started patrolling, there was little or no activity. Indeed, the illegal checkpoint problem in the area that so concerned TF Kandahar earlier that summer dropped away.[27]

O Company was next. Major Steve Brown's company was at this point occupying its outposts in Panjsher, Salavat, and Fatollah and patrolling between them. A pair of IED attacks around Fatollah triggered off increased UAV activity between there and Chalghowr which in turn led to MQ-1 Reaper engagements against small IED emplacement teams. The troops occupying COP Shojah brought in a sniper detachment to deal with another observed emplacement team. The snipers made short work of it. On 21-22 September, O Company working with Afghan army forces, moved on Chalghowr and swept through it. They also conducted an air assault on the Fatollah crossroads as part of the operation. Engineers arrived to start construction on a combat outpost for an incoming Afghan army company. There was no apparent opposition.[28]

Indeed, there were reports that local people in Panjwayi were going up against the Taliban on their own. The police commander in Salehan supplied weapons to a civilian group in a community south of his position, probably to use that community as a screen against insurgents in Chalghowr. An IED attack near Fatollah that wounded several local people resulted in the physical beating of known Taliban insurgents by the community. Within a week the word was out that enemy commanders in the greater Nakhonay area were departing. The insurgents even achieved an own goal when an IED took out a commander from the Nakhonay: He and his men drove over a device emplaced by another group.[29]

Major Austin Douglas and B Company continued to occupy Nakhonay. Aside from a pair of ineffective small arms attacks and the employment of an 82mm recoilless rifle against COP Ballpeen, the only major event was the bizarre employment by the enemy of a donkey-borne IED against a Canadian patrol that resulted in four Canadian soldiers and two local children wounded.[30]

The next iteration of MATIN AZIM occurred on 28-29 September in the Kenjakak area. There was no opposition and some small caches were discovered. The only other significant enemy activity was against the Leopard tank squadron. Maj Rob Mackenzie and his tankers were occupying a leaguer west of Nakhonay when they came under mortar fire wounding one. 20 rounds of 81mm mortar from D Battery, directed using the counter-mortar radar that was operating with the squadron, successfully landed on target, destroying the enemy mortar teams. After that, the insurgents steered clear of the tank leaguer.[31]

There were several spin-off effects of Operation MATIN AZIM. The disruptive movements in the three communities led to SOF targeting a significant enemy commander who was forced to move abruptly and was then captured.[32] The enemy groups from east of Sperwan all the way to Adamzai now complained to their leadership about the lack of IED supplies. As a result, there were increased attempts to breach the razor wire fence established west of Route Brown, leading to an increased number of engagements along that line. The strikes near Zangabad interfered with enemy homemade explosive production as well.[33] LCol Mialkowski recognized that the effects were temporary, that the enemy would adapt. But Operation MATIN AZIM bought a precious commodity and that was time. Time to get the Afghan forces into Panjwayi District.

OMLT Operations, Fall 2010

The OMLT's brief of working on long-term aspects of Afghan National Army professionalization was tempered by several realities. First, the new Canadian rotation was only going to last from September until the end of the mission in late May 2011. Col Ian Creighton and his staff were still working to reverse the effects of the removal of the company mentoring teams. Second, there were immediate operational problems in Panjwayi that needed solving. Finally, the incoming OMLT commanded by Colonel Hercule Gosselin was in-bound but out of phase with the other deploying organizations and only had five months to accomplish anything when it hit the ground in December.[34]

The process of gaining cooperation between the Afghan army and TF Kandahar on Panjwayi district operations was, as we have seen, a slow one. The priority for Afghan army forces in the province during the summer of 2010 were the Arghandab operations. BGen Vance and Col Creighton were able to make headway in getting an Afghan company stationed in Nakhonay, and in re-organizing the OMLT to re-create a company mentor team to handle that relationship. With a new but experienced 1-205 Brigade commander, Brig Gen Habibi, and with the outline planning done by Maj Gen Nick Carter's RC (South) headquarters to retake the Horn of Panjwayi, it appeared that more was possible in the realm of OMLT operations.[35]

The initial Afghan army laydown by September 2010 as it affected Canadian operations had 1st Kandak in Arghandab district, with 3rd Kandak in Kandahar City. 2nd Kandak was in Panjwayi, while the combat support and combat service support kandaks had units distributed in these three areas. There was a company from an Oruzgan-based kandak in Nakhonay, working with an ad hoc Canadian mentor team. With the Afghan army's priority task of securing Kandahar City, Canadian operations in Panjwayi and Dand were of a secondary nature. On a positive note, however, Habibi was enthusiastic about company-level operations, something his predecessor loathed, and had less of a problem with decentralization when it came to working with Canadian units.[36]

At this point in the war, Lt Col Baris' 2nd Kandak was categorized as tired and burned out from the pace of enforced partnered operations with coalition forces in the spring and summer. It resisted a move to Sperwan Ghar and was not ready to be the lead Afghan army organization to go into the Horn.[37] There were two incoming kandaks, however, from other brigades and corps but these were cut to 1-205 Brigade. To avoid confusion they were re-numbered 6th Kandak and 7th Kandak. They were assigned to Panjwayi and Dand districts respectively.[38]

There were teething problems, however. The new Kandaks came from other brigades, so they had to develop a relationship with 1-205 Brigade first. This strained an already over-taxed brigade logistics system. This took time to sort out and required the assistance of the OMLT and the National Support Element. The winding down of operations in Arghandab also meant that Habibi's brigade headquarters was moving to Panjwayi. That required infrastructure, which in turn meant assigning scare construction engineering and contracting capabilities.[39] The 6th Kandak and 7th Kandak commanding officers were anxious to get moving but had to be constantly reminded by the OMLT that tactical infrastructure "must first be defensible, and then livable."[40]

When all was said and done, the OMLT was caught in a dilemma. The organization had to address immediate operational problems while at the same time it had to operate within the partnering construct. As Creighton saw it, the summer operations under Vance were a tactical fight where the OMLT worked with the Afghans from 2nd Kandak and the 1 RCR Battle Group to stabilize the situation. The longer-term issues of institutional mentoring and the 404 Maywand police organization came a distant second on the priority list. At the same time, restructuring the OMLT to deal with lower-level company-level operations had to take place to ensure success. With Habibi replacing Basir and Milner replacing Vance, the opportunity existed to rationalize OMLT operations for the remainder of the Canadian Army's time in southern Afghanistan. OMLT mentors, now called Kandak Mentor Teams, deployed with both 2nd Kandak and 6th Kandak at the company-level. TF 1-71 Cav remained partnered with 7th Kandak in Dand for the time being but eventually a Kandak Mentor Team arrived in the fall.[41] As BGen Milner saw it, the battle group's partnerships with the kandaks would be augmented with mentoring at the company and kandak-level. At the top of the chain of command, Milner himself would partner with Habibi, and the new OMLT commander, Col Gosselin, would be Habibi's mentor.[42]

When Col Gosselin took over the 281-strong OMLT in November 2010, he immediately saw issues with partnering. There were now two kandaks in Panjwayi and one Canadian battle group, therefore the stipulated company-to-company ratio just was not possible. The reality that all involved had to accept was that there was no more Canadian leverage at the Ministry of Defence level, none at the 205 Corps level, and that the Canadian

Photo Credit: Author

The Afghan security forces played a much greater role in Panjwayi District in 2010-2011, eventually peaking at five kandaks, two of which were partnered with Canadian forces. This was a dramatic improvement from the 2006–2007 period and a testament to the cumulative efforts of the Canadian Operational Mentor and Liaison Team.

operational agenda in Kandahar was now more important than Afghan National Army development. The hard reality was that measurements of effectiveness vis-à-vis Canadian progress in Panjwayi district operations were going to be the driver from here on to the end of the mission. That said, Gosselin determined that the best enduring item he and the OMLT could achieve was to build up Afghan army confidence in conducting operations at all levels, but particularly at the command level within 1-205 Brigade and its kandaks. Discarding the strict partnering directives as a strait jacket, the hybrid partnering-mentoring structure was now going to be used in every possible way to make this happen.[43]

Ultimately the new structure retained the Brigade Mentor Team with 1-205 Brigade but continued with the trend of breaking up the 404 Maywand training teams and reassigning them back to the Kandaks. In addition, the P-OMLT was once again given back to the OMLT. A fifth team was added which put two P-OMLT teams in Dand, and three in Panjwayi. The Kandak Mentoring Teams were completely reorganized and 'task tailored' so that both Afghan police and army units in Panjwayi could work with Canadian companies. For example, Kandak Mentoring Team 7 had two company mentoring teams to work with two companies from 6th Kandak that were working with B and C Companies from the battle group, and also had two P-OMLT teams to work with the Afghan police assigned to the areas of operations covered by B and C Companies. In this sense the final OMLT configuration was different from its predecessors and suited to lower-level operations in the communities.[44] By October the Afghan army units that the battle group were associated with in Panjwayi district were 2nd Kandak and 6th Kandak from 1/205 Brigade. (see Figure 8-2)

Governance Issues

TF Kandahar's involvement in provincial-level matters was, as we have seen, significantly reduced by 2010. The fall 2010 provincial elections, for example, hardly registered as an issue in the headquarters. The usual security operations conducted during elections were mounted in Panjwayi and Dand, with almost no significant enemy interference, despite exaggerated claims to the contrary by the Quetta Shura.[45] The assassination campaign in Kandahar City did overlap with the election but it was part of a larger insurgent intimidation strategy as opposed to the specific targeting of the election process. That said, the Director of the Haj Mohommad Timori, was assassinated with a car bomb near the Governor's Palace. This killing was seen as deliberate targeting of religious authorities.[46]

A potentially divisive issue that temporarily affected relations between the provincial government and TF Kandahar was the threat by an obscure American religious figure to publicly burn the Koran:

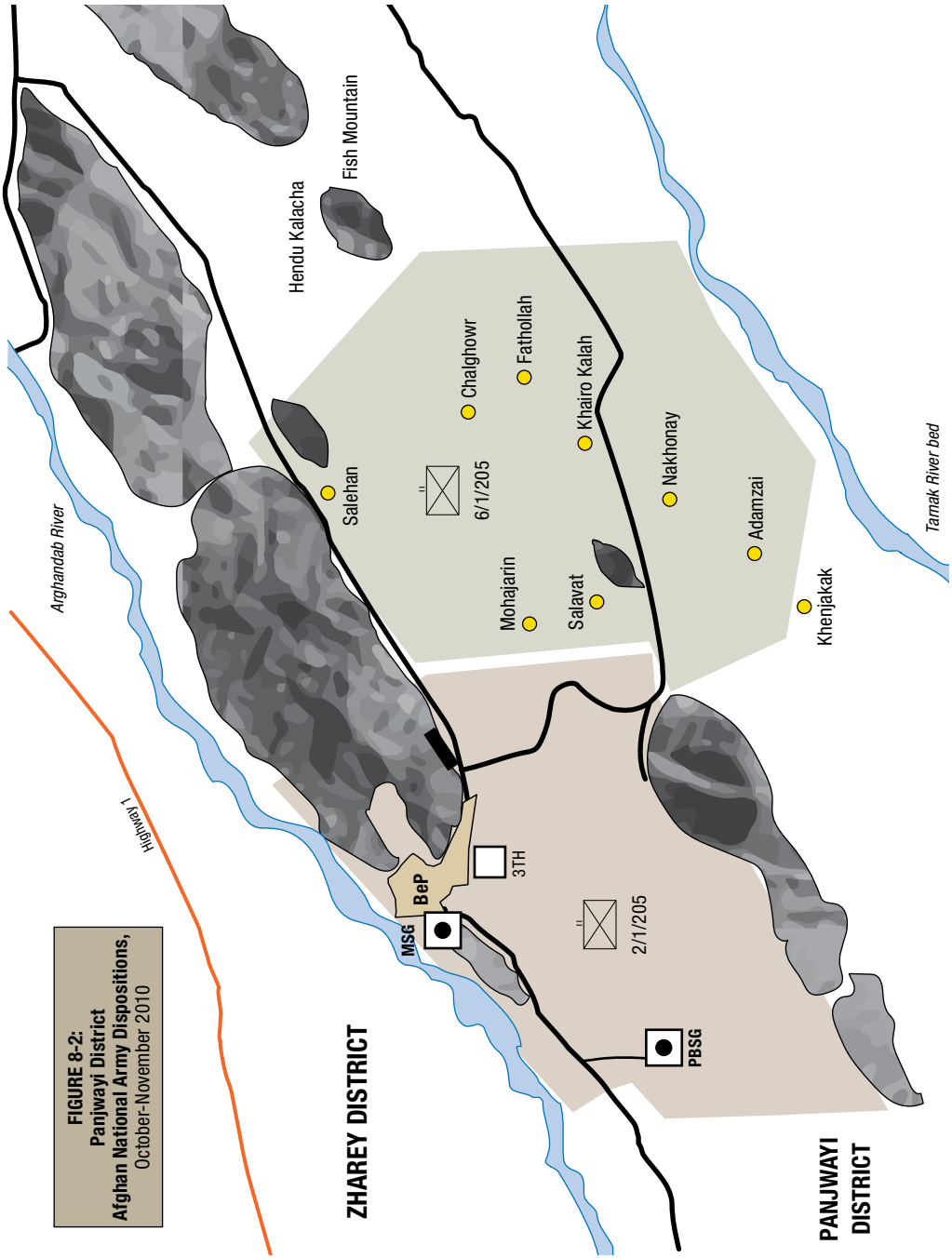

Figure 8-2: Panjwayi District: Afghan National Army Dispositions, October-November 2010

> The [deputy governor] essentially stated that he would support a jihad against the coalition forces if the planned events were not stopped. The Mayor of Kandahar City (a U.S. citizen from Virginia) said we should get the CIA and FBI to stop the burning of Korans. The Governor of Kandahar listened to these comments and stated to the [provincial coordination centre staff] "now you've heard our position, please pass it along to your side" … Of particular concern is the public pressure that [Government of Afghanistan] officials will face to distance themselves from ISAF …[47]

Though the Taliban's information operations experts likely rubbed their hands together in glee, nothing immediate came of this event.

ISTAR reportage, however, picked up on a problematic development on the other side of the Durand Line. Afghans, and it was not clear exactly who or who backed them, were having phony voter registration cards printed in printing facilities in Peshawar. These were then sold to parliamentary candidates in Kandahar for a small sum per vote. Reports of this issue constituted yet another blow to electoral credibility.[48]

When the election did occur in mid-September, TF Kandahar's District Support Teams monitored the situation in Panjwayi and Dand. Despite the significantly improved security arrangements, voter turnout in the province was estimated to be 20%, or less than half that of the national elections in 2009.[49]

Though the ASIC had steadily moved away from detailed analysis of the Kandahar political scene and more towards tactical intelligence in Panjwayi and Dand, it kept a passing eye on higher-level events. Corruption of the political process did not surprise the analysts. Reportage continued on the role of Ahmad Wali Karzai in "nefarious activity" and concluded "If AWK is truly connected to individuals that are doing these activities, whether by his direction or not, it is likely that corruption in Kandahar City will never be completely brought under control."[50]

Dand District Operations, Fall 2010

Lt Col John Paganini's TF 1-71 Cav and the Canadian organizations aligned with it worked steadily to assist District Governor Nazek in moving deeper into the Build stage in Dand district. The fundamental security problems in the district continued throughout the fall in the same areas that were problematic in the summer. The first was the Walakan-Hendu Kalache area, and the second consisted of the communities south of Tarnak River. It should be stressed, however, that the insurgency in these areas was operating at a very low level of intensity compared to Panjwayi. In both Dand areas there was a mix of intimidation and IED emplacement. There was an assassination team trying to step up operations in the south. As the supply chain was squeezed, however, there were fewer and fewer IED attacks.

The ISTAR web in Dand, which consisted of RAID sensor towers in American tactical infrastructure and various types of UAVs orbiting the area, was able to take out emplacement teams regularly.[51]

One event that affected the situation in Dand was Operation MAYWAND, a large-scale clear of Malajat by Afghan security forces and American CTF RAIDER early in September. The provincial police chief, who had just sent equipment and vehicles to the Dand police, now wanted both men and the equipment redeployed as part of MAYWAND. This significantly reduced the operational tempo of the Dand police, to the Canadian P-OMLT's chagrin. And, as the Afghan forces engaged in MAYWAND took casualties, Dand police were involved in evacuating wounded police to Dand from Malajat, which in turn overloaded the Dand policing facilities.[52]

The enemy assassination team working in the southern part of Dand proved to be elusive. In one case a pro-government Mullah was murdered. TF 1-71 Cav mounted Operation TORNADO and deployed in Canadian Chinooks for a trio of airmobile insertions into the communities south of the Tarnak River (see Figure 8-3). The enemy team disappeared and popped up a week later to commit another killing. This sort of activity could only be countered with more police presence but they were mostly deployed supporting of MAYWAND.[53]

The Dand police were improving. Un-partnered patrols found IED after IED, cordoned them off, and called for the U.S. Air Force EOD team working with TF 1-71 Cav. The Canadian P-OMLT was hampered by its practically non-existent mobility, a legacy of the Ménard re-organization. The MP Company simply did not have the sustainment resources to keep the P-OMLTs on the road, and they were forbidden to ride in Afghan police Rangers because of the IED threat. The Canadian mentors did what they could, when they could, but their potential was not fully realized at this time. That said, they played a valuable role in security coordination in the district.[54]

The Walakan-Hendu Kalache 'seam' required attention, if only to keep the enemy in the area disrupted and to perhaps deter insurgents from using the community as a way station. A combined TF 1-71 Cav and Dand police patrol came under fire in Walakan on 21 September. They returned fire and advanced on a compound that served as the enemy's firing position. The building proved to be booby-trapped and the device exploded, killing one American, wounding two other Americans and one Afghan. Concerned that this compound was bait, it was destroyed with an air strike.[55]

TF 1-71 Cav and the Afghan forces worked together to prepare for the inbound 7th Kandak. This involved Clear operations in Zalakan (Operation MADAREE) and in Hendu Kalache, as well as conversations with local leaders as to where they though the new combat outposts should be positioned. 7th Kandak troops flowed in by the end of the month

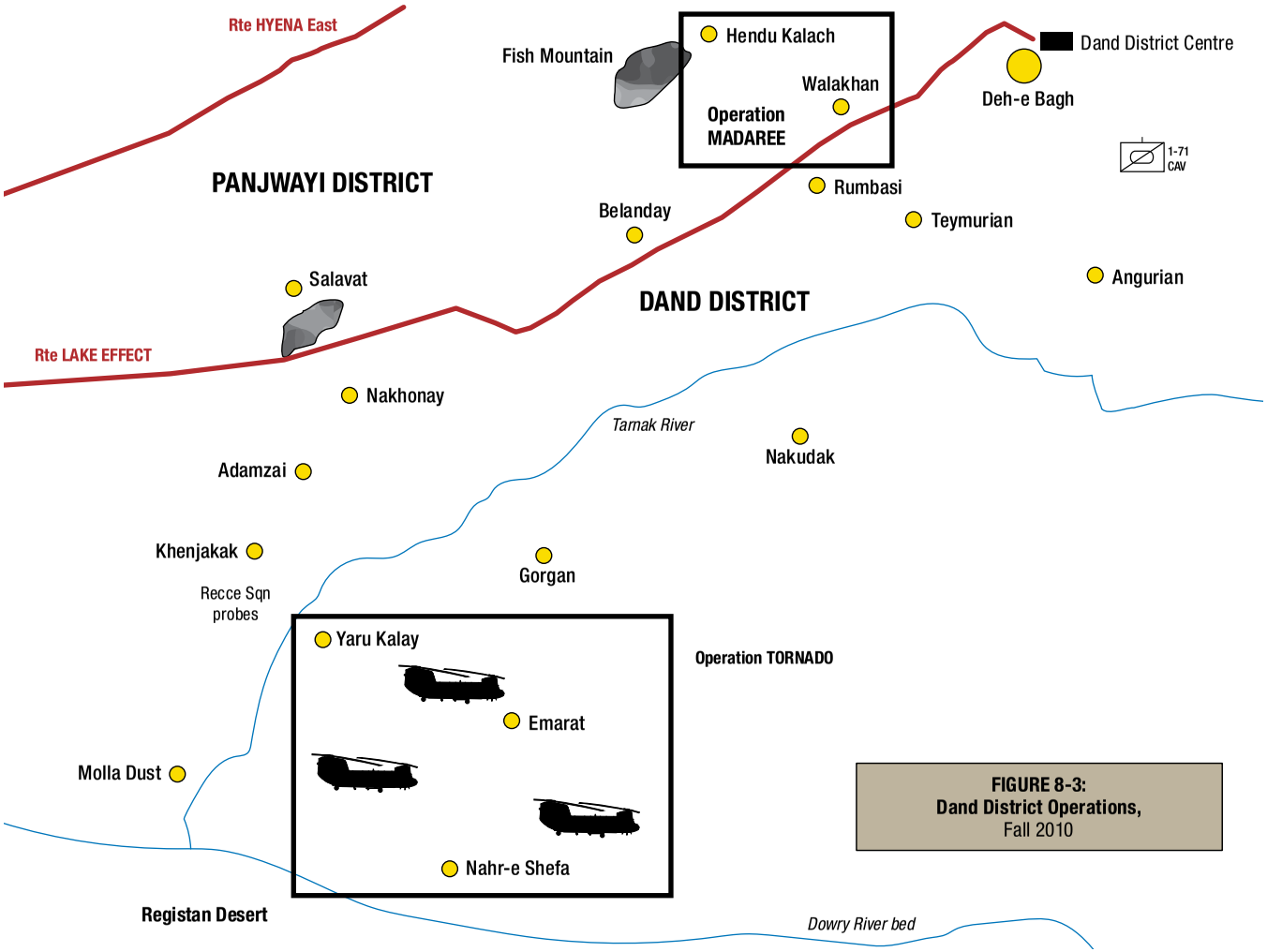

Figure 8-3: Dand District Operations, Fall 2010

FIGURE 8-3:
Dand District Operations,
Fall 2010

but the OMLT reported that "despite assurances that [7th Kandak] would have infrastructure developed for them upon deployment into Dand District, the soldiers would continue to live in austere conditions in Zalakan, Walakhan, and Tarnak. While CO [7th Kandak] is very eager to conduct operations, he is very reluctant to commit further forces into that district until the companies that are currently deployed have adequate living accommodations."[56]

Concurrently the enemy worked on building a network across southern Dand all the way over to Chineh and points east, then north into Malajat. They were, however, increasingly hampered by the improved security posture over in Nakhonay and Kenjakak. The combination of operations in eastern Panjwayi and in Dand contributed to the application of serious pressure on the insurgent groups trying to operate between Zangabad and Kandahar City.[57]

On the development front, most of the reportage coming out of the District Support Team was generally good throughout September and October. The long-awaited Kandahar City Bypass route was now underway in Dand and the District Development Assembly met regularly. The Afghan government line ministries now had representation in Dand and Nazek also had an expanded administrative staff. Several health facilities were operating. On the policing side, the claw back of resources by the provincial chief had a significant impact on morale but within a month the Dand police bounced back and assumed responsibility for one-third of the district. The district leadership was less and less concerned with the day-to-day security situation and more and more focused on establishing markets, paving roads, and getting commerce going. Nazek and his family, however, needed close scrutiny to deter them from falling back on their nepotistic tendencies. Dand was firmly in the Build category by November 2010.[58]

Operation BAAWAR: Panjwayi District, October–November 2010

The July discussions between Vance and Carter led to a layered series of operations in Panjwayi throughout October–November that were designed to retake and occupy the western part of the district and then deepen the Hold on the eastern portion. There were a lot of moving parts in what became one of the most complex operations of the war involving Canadian troops in Kandahar province.

Both MGen Carter and MGen Terry at Regional Command (South) were convinced that the Horn of Panjwayi needed a thorough Clear, but the big questions of resources and phasing had to be settled first. Also, any effort to retake the Horn would be futile if it did not extend into Zharey District, especially the Heart of Darkness around Nahlgam and Sia Choy. That meant a Clear of Zharey District, and CTF Strike, the American brigade responsible for Zharey and Arghandab districts, was earmarked for a push south to the Arghandab River in October.

This was a maximum force operation involving nightly air strikes for several weeks. Every movement by American forces down a route was preceded by Mine Clearance Line Charges ('micklicks') so much so that observers referred to 'belt-fed MCLC use' (Apparently CENTCOM's operational stocks of MCLC's ran low during the operation). The number and frequency of explosions in Zharey overwhelmed the HALO system and affected even the counter-mortar radar systems in Panjwayi. The tank squadron at Ma'sum Ghar got in a few shots and Canadian ISTAR resources played a role, but for the most part it was an American show. In time CTF Strike reached the Arghandab River using old Route Langley and constructed a prefabricated concrete wall designed to separate Zharey from Panjwayi, leaving the crossing point near Bazaar-e Panjwayi open.[59]

While CTF STRIKE pushed south, Regional Command (South) implemented another plan to move into the Horn of Panjwayi using part of a U.S. battalion, 1-187 Infantry, to occupy positions in the Horn. This was portrayed variously as an extension of the CTF STRIKE operations into the Horn, or as some form of supporting effort to STRIKE's operations in Zharey on the southern bank of the Arghandab. Some of the staff at the Milner-led TF Kandahar believed that Maj Gen Carter lacked confidence in Canada's ability to undertake this task but as we have seen he had been dissuaded by Canadian officers during the Ménard period from using the battle group in this role. Others believed that the competitive CTF STRIKE wanted the job and lobbied hard to get it. In any case, the forces going into the Horn on 15 October were not under TF Kandahar's command. The command chain involved the special operations world, CTF STRIKE, and Regional Command (South). When the American companies set up shop in Zangabad and expressed a desire to extend operations to Talukan and Mushan, however, TF Kandahar staff with previous experience saw that this was déjà vu all over again: the American infantry companies were occupying three small security bubbles, just as 2 PPCLI Battle Group did in 2008. Without a secure means of resupply and freedom of movement, there could be no long-term progress in the Horn.[60]

That issue was understood by Carter at Regional Command (South) however, and steps were taken to develop a supplementary plan between TF Kandahar, 1-205 Brigade, and Regional C ommand (South). This was Operation BAAWAR ('Trust' or 'Assurance'). BAAWAR had two main phases (see Figure 8-4). First, secure eastern Panjwayi and get the Afghan security forces in place and operating. This would free up resources for the second phase, the re-occupation of the Horn and the eventual relief in place of the American and Afghan units operating there with Canadians and Afghans. When the time came for Canada to depart, a hand over to a new American unit would take place sometime in 2011. A sub-operation of BAAWAR was Operation PASS RAFTAN ('The Return').[61] PASS RAFTAN involved the construction of the Ground Line of Communication or GLOC, that is, the extension of the old Fosters Paving Project all the way from Ma'Sum Ghar to Mushan.[62]

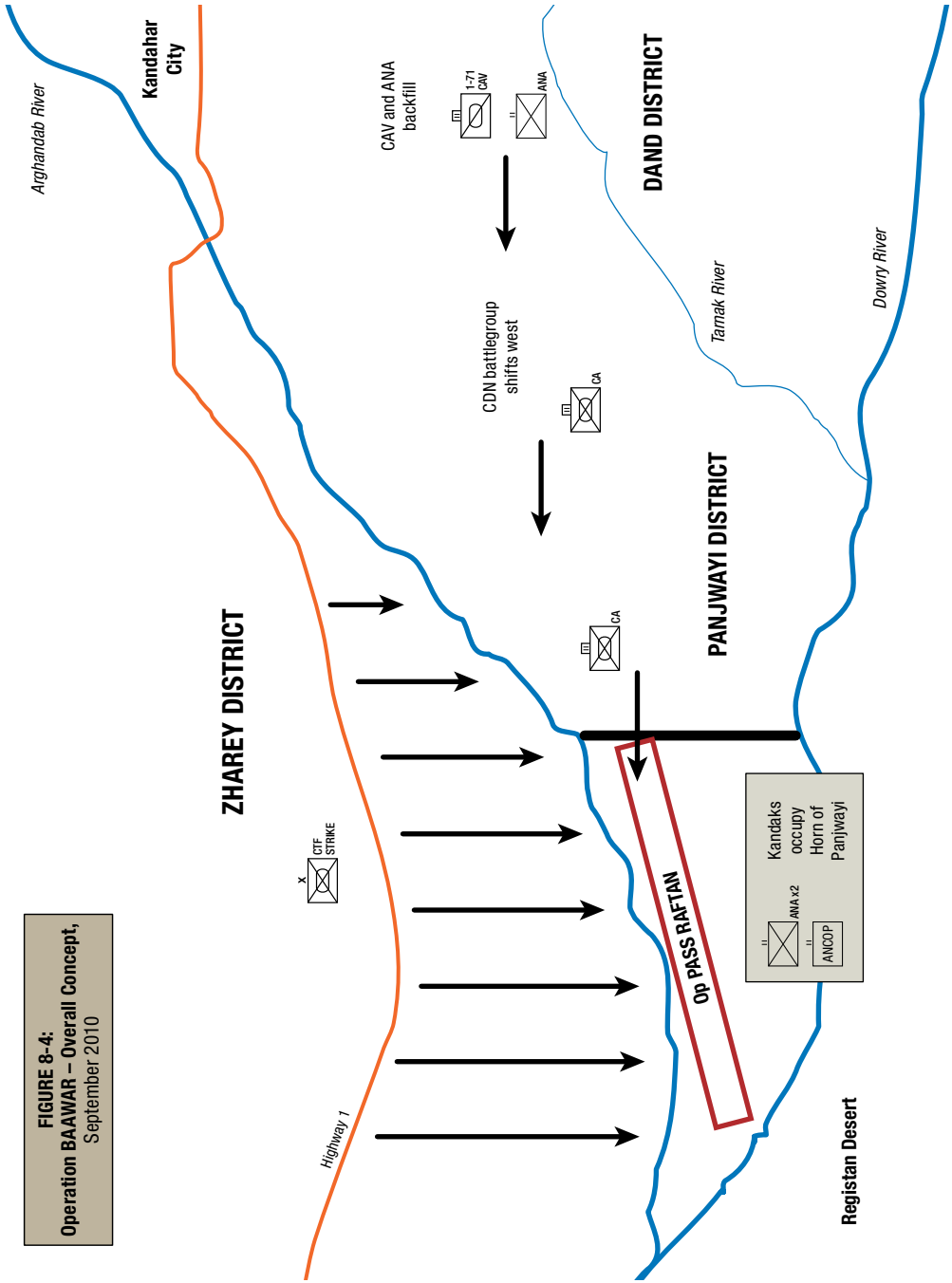

FIGURE 8-4:
Operation BAAWAR – Overall Concept,
September 2010

Figure 8-4: Operation BAAWAR – Overall Concept, September 2010

Operation BAAWAR ultimately employed every facet of TF Kandahar's organization throughout October and November. The first involved a combination of Maj Barbara Honig's Engineer Construction Squadron, CIMIC teams, and the OMLT. The existing tactical infrastructure in Panjwayi had to be improved and expanded to accommodate 1 RCR Battle Group, 2nd Kandak, 6th Kandak, 1-205 Brigade headquarters, and any and all military and civilian construction engineering assets, plus their protection forces. These activities included land clearances, construction contracting, and key leadership engagements in all of the communities that the forces would be operating in. Then roads between all of the nodes had to be built and existing ones improved to reduce the threat of IED's. This phase of the operation took the entire month of October with the resulting laydown of forces depicted in Figure 8-5. These projects employed several hundred local men. The Commander's Contingency Fund was used to pay for most of it, as American CERP monies were caught up in increasingly Gordian Knot-like red tape generated by recent and negative audits of that program.[63]

While all of this was in play, TF Kandahar conducted a series of disrupt operations which took several forms. First, BGen Milner accepted the fact that 1 RCR Battle Group was by this point in their tour seriously fatigued. Casualties, HLTA, plus regular wear and tear reduced the sortie rate from the patrol bases they inhabited. There was an increasing tendency to use the aerostats to spot for artillery strikes and direct fire from 25mm guns in run-up positions against identified IED emplacers. Orbiting UAVs controlled by either TF Kandahar operations centre or the battle group operations centre took care of the places in between. There were engagements every other day of all types throughout October which in many cases killed insurgents singly or in pairs. The cumulative effect was to maintain coalition freedom of movement. There was only one major IED strike during this period which killed Senior Airman Daniel Johnson of the U.S. Air Force EOD unit and wounded several others.[64]

The second was the use of SOF to target identified mid-level enemy commanders in Panjwayi and Dand. BGen Milner was adamant that SOF play a role in this and was convinced the effects on enemy activity would be significant. Related to this was the use of SOF and airstrikes to destroy any homemade explosive production facility identified using ISTAR resources in a calculated effort to attrit the insurgent's dwindling IED capacity. A collateral effect included several major IED turn ins: in one case sixty directional fragmentation charges were turned in by local people, as well as a suicide vest production facility.[65]

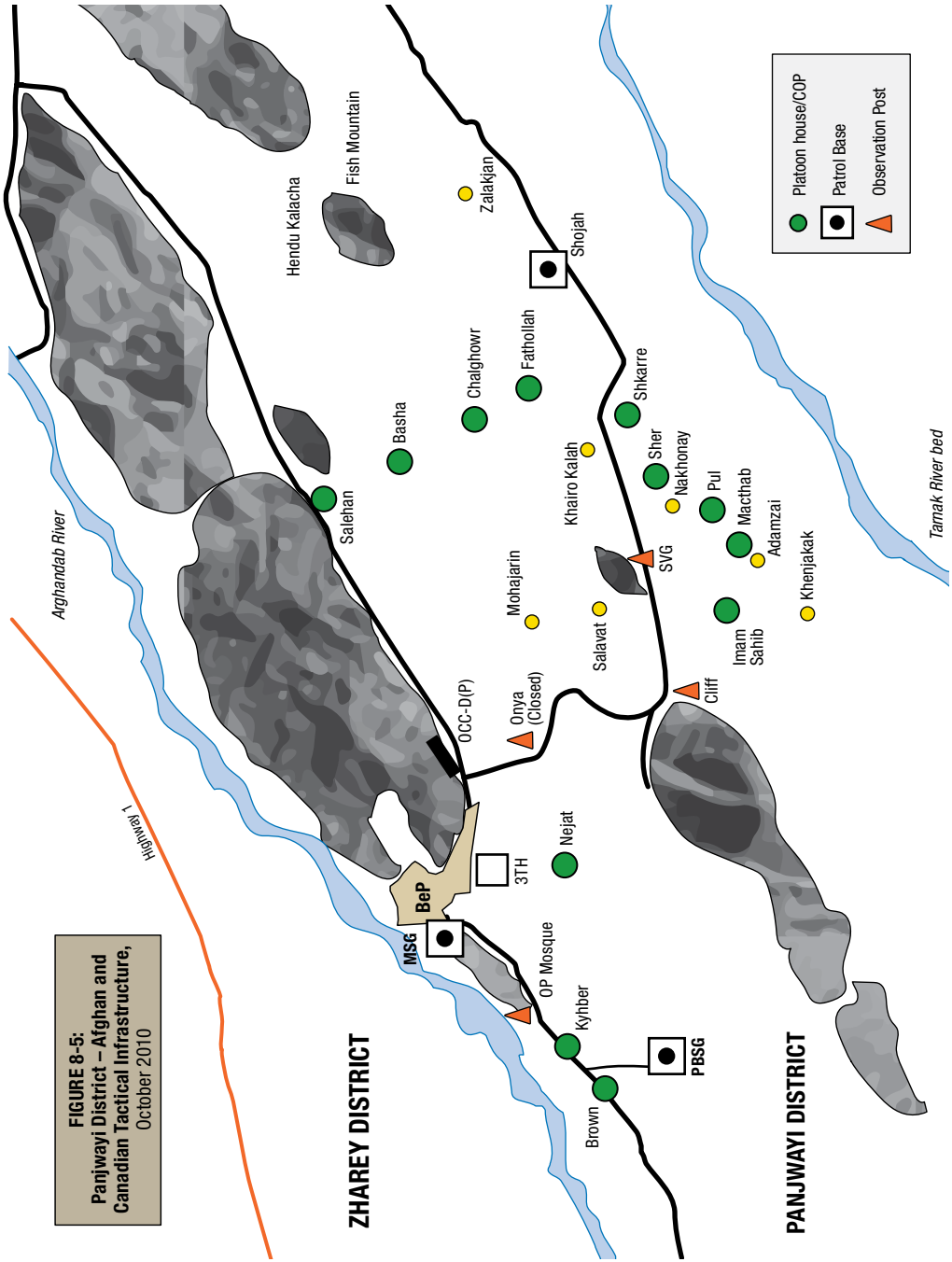

Figure 8-5: Panjwayi District – Afghan and Canadian Tactical Infrastructure, October 2010

A key area of concern was eastern Panjwayi in the area handled by Maj Steve Brown's O Company. Additional CIMIC resources were applied in an effort to win Chalghowr and environs over and O Company aggressively patrolled the area while Afghan army tactical infrastructure was under construction. Ultimately Maj Austin Douglas's B Company mounted similar operations in the greater Nakhonay area and the eastern Panjwayi operations. These were dubbed Operation ETEBAR ('Trust').

The importance of gaining ascendency in eastern Panjwayi cannot be overstated as it was the prerequisite for success in the overall plan. The long-term reasons related to the Dand-Kandahar City 'ratlines' remaining in play, but the medium-term issues related to the Horn clearance operations and the ultimate handover of the district by Canada to Afghan and American forces in 2011, which loomed over the whole effort.[66]

The chronic problem of policing in Panjwayi district now had to be addressed. The philosophical problem of using the army to police the people was in the forefront, but the practical morale-based problem of 2nd Kandak's boredom with what Afghan troops derisively called 'traffic control duty' on the Route Hyena checkpoints had to be addressed. The kandaks did not want to be 'beat cops' and that included members of 6th Kandak. The convoluted rotation of four different chiefs of police for the district in 2010 and the turbulence it generated in the governance sector indicated a loss of Canadian influence in higher police circles, despite the OMLT's involvement in 404 Maywand Corps police training. ANCOP was a special forces bailiwick and could not easily be leveraged for Focused District Development operations. Indeed, ANCOP refused outright to do any policing that was not related to their planned Hold operations in the Horn. As a result, a concerted effort led by BGen Milner and Col Gosselin was made to improve policing in Panjwayi as part and parcel of Operation BAAWAR.[67]

Milner reported that "I continue to assess the lack of a functional [Afghan police] capacity as the most pressing security issue in the Area of Operations. In Panjwayi the situation is critical."[68] There were two levels to this problem: provincial and district. At the provincial level, access was needed with Governor Wesa, the provincial police chief, and 404 Maywand Corps. In the district, TF Kandahar had to work on District Governor Haji Baran and whoever the new district chief of police was going to be.

The key players in leveraging more police support at the provincial level were LCol Louis Cyr, the Military Advisor at Camp Nathan Smith, and Tim Martin, the RoCK. Milner viewed the other provincial-level players as not useful in the effort, particularly DFAIT. In effect Milner, Cyr, and Martin constituted "a virtual PRT" when it came to policing matters.[69] Marshalling support from Haji Baran and other district-level powerbrokers on one hand, and Maj Gen Carter at Regional Command (South) and Lt Gen Khan Mohammed at the regional level, Milner was able to get a new chief for

Panjwayi, Mohammad Azim, a Noorzai originally from Talukan. He arrived in mid-October and in the words of LCol Conrad Mialkowski, "Scared the bejeezus out of everybody." For some reason Governor Wesa and his political allies were alarmed at this appointment.[70]

At the district level, the key organizations supporting Chief Azim were the MP Company, the P-OMLT (which Milner put back under Colonel Hercule Gosselin's OMLT), OCC-D(P), and the District Support Team. And in time CIVPOL was prepared to send a mentor down to Panjwayi. Everything was done to assist the policing effort. By the end of October Chief Azim was showing dramatic results. TF Kandahar reported that there were 236 registered cops in the district, most of them recruited by Azim, of which 66 had almost completed their FDD training. Azim went out and personally recruited 200 more and fed them into the training system where they were prioritized, a process that was the result of Canadian influence efforts. The main issue now was sustainment and that was where the P-OMLT played a significant role in improving that state of affairs. Azim immediately pushed the new officers out into the district communities.[71]

Photo Credit: Author

In the absence of meaningful development programs in contested areas, CIMIC operations were pushed down to community level and coordinated with the District Support Team.

The final piece was the Citizen Engagement Strategy. In essence the District Support Team worked to get Haji Baran out and about to every key leadership engagement imaginable. This was particularly important in the road construction shuras held with communities so they could advise on route location and what could and could not be taken down. Baran may have lost influence in some quarters but his presence brought out other Panjwayi power brokers who saw that things were changing in the district and who wanted to be involved.[72]

Such a concentrated and coordinated effort was simply not possible during previous Canadian rotations. TF Kandahar in the past was spread thin over several districts and never had anywhere near the concentration of Afghan security forces that were in Panjwayi at this time. There were two army kandaks and one ANCOP kandak in Panjwayi, plus the Canadian battle group and the myriad of Canadian enablers from TF Kandahar, whereas 2 RCR Battle Group deployed an infantry company, an artillery detachment and some Coyote recce vehicles and almost no enablers to Panjwayi in 2007. The provincial-level development distractions were no longer impinging on events and resources, thus freeing up valuable Canadian staff and planning effort.

One significant issue was the upcoming relief in place scheduled for the end of November. The Milner-led TF Kandahar headquarters would remain but all of its constituent units would rotate. So would Carter's Regional Command (South). To stave off any enemy interference, a series of disrupt operations were planned throughout November. In essence they were similar to the measures employed in October, and they produced similar results. Each battle group company surged into their respective communities in succession, taking along their partnered Afghan companies and OMLT mentors. O Company went into Chalghowr, I Company swept Haji Habbibollah, Charles Company went through Sperwan, and B Company surged into Nakhonay. These disrupt operations were conducted in the middle two weeks in November as 1 R22eR Battle Group was RIPing in.[73] A new ASIC followed in November, led by Maj Marco Roy.

It was time to pass the torch.

Relief in Place and a New Regional Command (South): November, 2010

On 27 November, LCol Conrad Mialkowski and 1 RCR Battle Group handed over to LCol Michel-Henri St-Louis and the 1 R22eR Battle Group, with the remaining incoming units achieving full strength by 8 December.[74] Structurally, 1 R22eR Battle Group had four infantry companies instead of three: the Stabilization Company was now gone. For this rotation, there was A Company, led by Maj Pierre Leroux; B Company led by Maj André Girard; C Company led by Maj Christian Marquis; and Para Company led by Maj Frédéric Pruneau. The American company in the Horn, Dog Company commanded by Cpt Adam Scher, was also under tactical control, which effectively gave LCol St-Louis

an additional sub-unit. The battle group had a Recce Platoon, as well as an enhanced sniper platoon consisting of 18 snipers. All infantry companies were equipped with the LAV III LORIT variant and all companies also had designated sharpshooters equipped with C-3 weapons to augment the sniper capability.[75]

The tank squadron, now designated C Squadron, was led by Maj Éric Landry of 12 RBC, who was one of the original planners for Horn of Panjwayi operations in the Laroche headquarters back in 2007. C Squadron at this time consisted of ten Leopard 2A6Ms, five Leopard 2A4's, and four Leopard 1C2's. Recce Squadron was based on A Squadron 12 RBC and led by Maj Christian Caron. With the high number of vehicle casualties over the years, A Squadron was down to two troops of eight vehicles consisting of a mixture of Coyotes, LAV III LORITs, LAV RWS variants, and TLAVs. The artillery battery, batterie X from 5 RALC had two troops of two M-777 guns each: it was led by Major Vincent Giroux. The combat engineer organization was 52e Escadron 5 RGC and was led by Major Francois Sauvé. A PSYOPS platoon and a CIMIC platoon were also integrated into the battle group. Administration Company was distributed to the forward operating bases to handle transport and maintenance.[76] By the first week in December 2010, the 1 R22eR Battle Group had fallen in on its predecessor's footprint, intending (as in any in rotation) to adjust for future operations (see Figure 8-6).

Canadian involvement with Regional Command (South) also changed in November. Unlike the Carter-led headquarters, Canadians were integrated from the start with the American 10th Mountain Division commanded by Maj Gen James Terry, who decided, based on his experiences in 2006, that he wanted a Canadian deputy division commander and staff officers. BGen André Corbould was selected to fill this position and other Canadian officers occupied key positions in the headquarters: planning, stability operations, and the Joint Operations Centre. Terry even sidelined some of his own division headquarters personnel so that Canadians could fill these slots.[77]

Possibly the most important aspect of Canadian involvement with the new Regional Command (South) headquarters was the formulation of the campaign plan. There were several important aspects of this issue. First, the McChrystal ISAF headquarters told 10th Mountain Division when it was earmarked for Afghanistan back in 2010 that there would be only one campaign plan, and that it would be McChrystal's. When Petraeus replaced McChrystal, this changed and Petraeus permitted lower-level campaign planning in the regional commands. In this case, the document was the Unified Implementation Plan or UIP. The UIP was a five-year plan and was a deliberate move away from the short-term planning that previous iterations of Regional Command (South) engaged in. Multiple Canadian Afghan alumni, including LCol's Mason Stalker, Mike Wright,

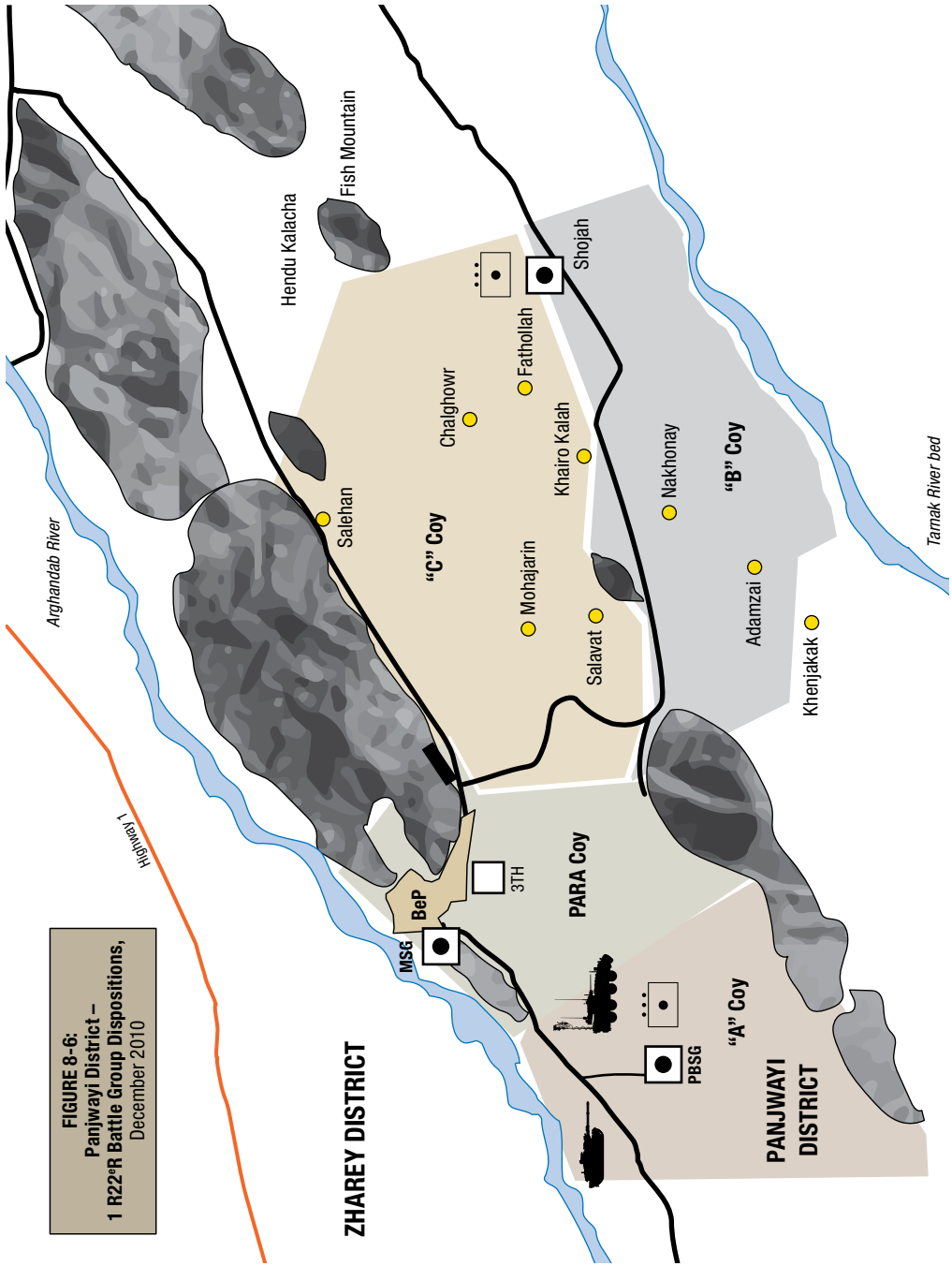

Figure 8-6: Panjwayi District – 1 R22eR Battle Group Dispositions, December 2010

and Darren Hart, were involved in the mission analysis which "ruffled a few feathers in 10th Mountain Division." The UIP's lines of operations, as it turned out, were an evolution of the CTF AEGIS campaign plan. In this case, they were to protect the people; aid and development; and stability and governance. Unlike previous plans, Regional Command (South) was only responsible for Kandahar, Oruzgan, Zabul and Daikundi. Helmand and Nimroz belonged to Regional Command (South West). The UIP drilled down to the district level and synchronized the security, development, and governance lines of operations over five years. Progress was measured every eight weeks. This permitted Regional Command (South) to move resources around and justify their use. Most importantly, this process "allowed us to decide what we were not going to do. It provided focus." The process also revealed gaps, that is, what was not being done.[78]

For example, two seemingly unconnected items like conducting a job fair for unemployed young men and the discovery of how the insurgency was stockpiling homemade explosive material along the border could now be synchronized with the security operations conducted by, say, TF Kandahar and CTF Strike in Panjwayi and Zahrey districts. By employing several hundred or thousand people immediately after poppy season, and by raiding the large caches of explosives established on the border at the same time, the ability of the insurgents to hire and deploy manpower and increase IED production could be attenuated. This was very different from having the divisional headquarters assign and re-assign helicopters, UAVs, and artillery resources to particular operations.[79]

Regional Command (South)'s assessed the enemy situation thus:

> We were looking at an insurgency that was under immense pressure to regain momentum. I think they've been stalled for years. Our sense was that they were under huge pressure internally because they had people within the insurgency who were, like, "Shit, man, we're not having the success we wanted to have." I think they were getting pressure from the ISI in Pakistan that expressed itself in terms like, "If you don't do well this year, we're not going to help you out, your support is dwindling and we are having problems supporting you." I think they were getting a lot of pressure from the population.[80]

In general, the Regional Command (South) approach involved:

> What we had going for us was the three pressure points that were focused on the enemy. We enhanced those pressure points as best we could. We tried to create gaps and seams within the enemy structure. We tried to deliberately isolate high-level Taliban from mid-level Taliban from low-level Taliban. And we did it in all sorts of ways. We did it with messaging, we tried to push them over the fence. We spread out during the fighting season. We had a lot of guys employed.[81]

The previous frictions between Regional Command (South) and TF Kandahar were reduced through personal contacts. BGen Corbould worked closely with Col Richard Giguère, the TF Kandahar deputy commander, to ensure that previous problems did not repeat themselves. It was clear to all that the Canadian position in Kandahar province was significantly reduced and that there were no aspirations to alter that trajectory.[82]

Supporting Task Force Kandahar Operations

The National Support Element commanded by LCol Sébastien Bouchard from November 2010 to July 2011 was structurally similar to the previous rotations and was manned at the same levels: 400 military, 330 CANCAP, 75 PSP. With the Provincial Reconstruction Team gone, the support positions were re-assigned within the NSE. The initial laydown was also similar to the previous rotation: FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, FOB Shojah, Patrol Base Sperwan Ghar were the primary NSE detachments forward, while the detachment in Kabul remains in place. Cooks were also distributed to the battle group platoon houses, while the NSE senior non-commissioned officers took over the FOBs to free up infantry. When Operation BAWAR was underway and the Zangabad facilities constructed, another NSE detachment was formed and deployed there.[83]

The most complex task for the NSE was the logistic support for Operation BAWAR. Until the road was completed, it all had to be conducted using aerial resupply. Recipients included not only the Canadian battle group, but also the American elements from Zharey district and American special forces that were working the Horn. The NSE coordinated frequent GPS-steered container drops from C-130 transports as well as helicopter resupply. When the system became overloaded, a 2008-style 'river run' with tanks and a Combat Logistics Patrol was launched from FOB Ma'Sum Ghar. The NSE worked closely with the Air Wing and the American 43 Sustainment Brigade to coordinate all of the BAWAR logistics activity. Over 1 million pounds of material was moved using Chinook helicopters, contract Jingle Trucks and, eventually, the CCAT Mi-17 helicopters once the threat situation shifted from red to green.[84] The NSE's main focus was operations in the Horn of Panjwayi and eastern Panjwayi District, but it also partnered with 1-205 Brigade's 5th Kandak to assist with technical training.[85]

The Bouchard-led NSE's final operation was the withdrawal of all Canadian equipment from the forward areas in June-July 2011. This massive operation also had to be conducted while maintaining logistic support to the incoming American forces in Panjwayi District: kitchens, fuel, and contracting support. The American procedures remained mired in a 90-day turnaround period, while Canadian contracting could be done in as little as 12 to 24 hours. Similarly American logistics convoys took two days to mount, whereas a Canadian Combat Logistics Patrol could leave the airfield in hours. Eventually, the NSE was also engaged in moving American equipment forward and bringing Canadian equipment back.

When the 43rd Sustainment Brigade deployed an extensive exchange of information took place on force protection, routes and fuel matters. A Forward Logistics Element or 'flee' was cut to the NSE from the American formation but it turned out to be too complex for the NSE to task it effectively.[86]

Unlike previous NSE's, the Bouchard-led NSE was responsible for handling the transition from TF Kandahar to the Mission Closure Unit on the logistic side (the Mission Closure Unit was later expanded and called the Mission Transition Task Force). This entailed closing or transferring all of the TF Kandahar tactical infrastructure to allied forces and removing Canadian equipment, cleaning, packing, and returning it to Canada. The delineation of tasks had the NSE closing tactical infrastructure and Mission Transition Task Force handling everything else. Similarly, the NSE had to expand its detachment in Kabul, which was responsible for supporting the Kabul 100, so that it could support 350 more personnel belonging to Operation ATTENTION, the planned Canadian military training mission. This made 2011 a busy time for the NSE and in some ways replicated the situation in 2005 when Operation ATHENA transitioned to Operation ARCHER, only in reverse.[87]

By 2011 signals support reached a stable state and the unit providing it was now designated the TK Kandahar Headquarters and Signals Squadron. Built around 2 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Headquarters and Signals Squadron, elements from the Joint Signal Regiment, and CANCAP contracted support services, the blurring between tactical and strategic communications finally ceased. The MEWTs still worked for the ASIC, a Very High Frequency radio troop was cut to the battle group, and the Strategic Rear Link was delineated as sub-unit. The proliferation of systems involved in the counter-IED fight led to the creation of an Electronic Countermeasures Section: it was responsible for keeping the vehicle jammers updated and frequencies deconflicted. The section also had a close relationship with the U.S. Marine Corps units in Helmand, who exchanged threat information with the Canadian 'jimmies.'[88]

In essence, the Squadron maintained a web of four communications systems in Kandahar Province to support operations. These included line-of-sight radio; satellite; a strategic satellite system and a civilian-contracted satellite system. The AN/PRC 117F was the primary company-platoon-level system in the field, while platoons also had crypto TACSAT radios. Again, this change was necessary because of the shift to distributed operations.[89]

The deployment of several types of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and other surveillance systems in the battle space posed challenges for spectrum management which affected the structure of the signals unit and the conduct of operations. There were now several PSS and PSTD aerostats operating over the Canadian area of operations (see Figure 8-7).

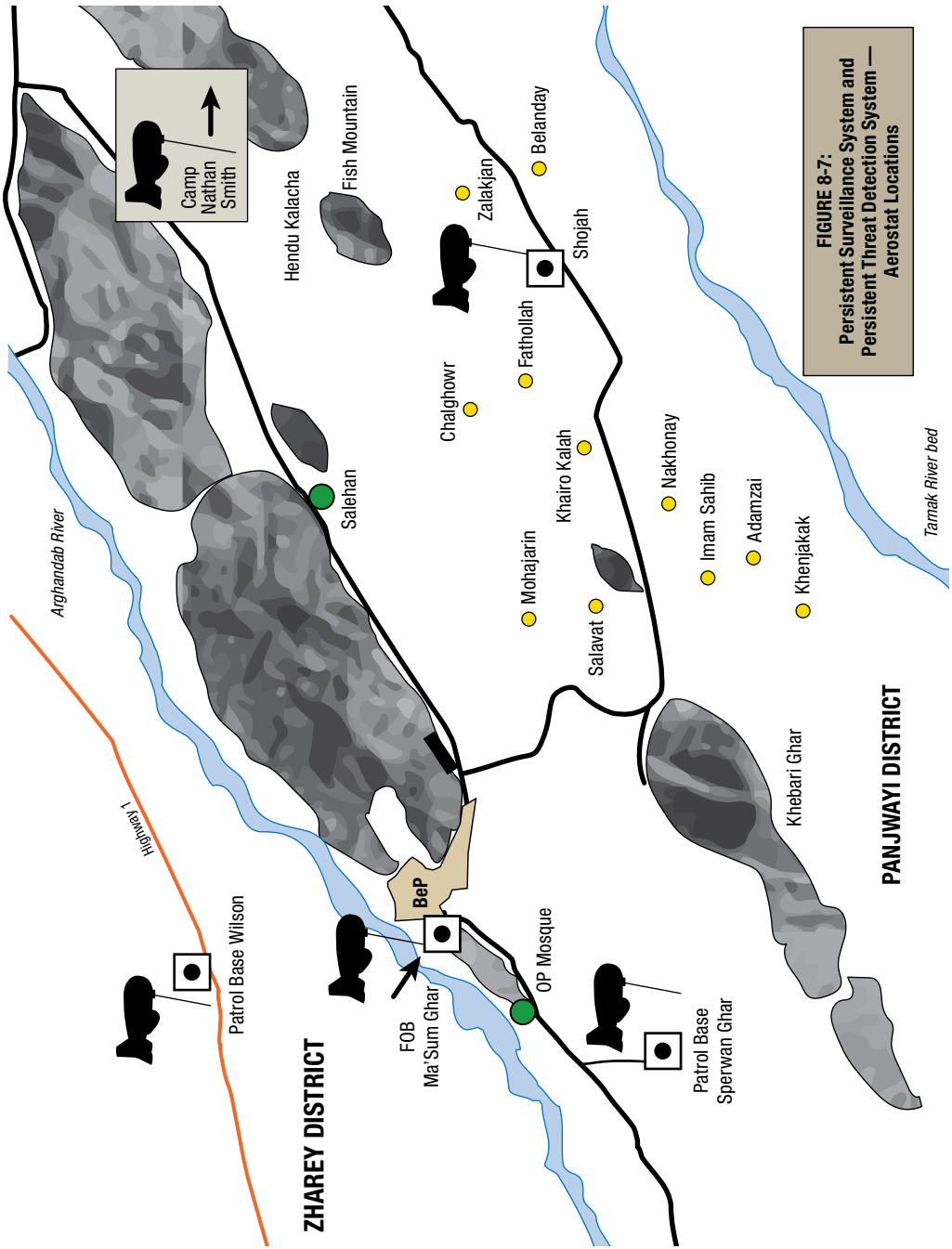

Figure 8-7: Persistent Surveillance Systems and Persistent Threat-Detection Systems — Aerostat Locations

This web of ISR sensors was useless without the proper signals architecture to support it. Getting this architecture right was critical, now more than ever. First, the task force commander's situational awareness and his decision making were increasingly influenced by the ISR web. Second, the presence of ISR deterred enemy activity and forced the enemy to operate in small teams, not groups. They could not mass. Third, the ISR web and the communications systems facilitated Type II engagements with the Predators, Reapers, and indirect fire. Constraining the signals architecture theoretically constrained all of these crucial capabilities. As a result there was no more scrimping on signals capabilities by 2011 and the 2006-era confusion over signals and ISR was a distant memory.

The MP Company led by Major Steeve Grégoire continued with its existing P-OMLT, Kandahar Air Field security, and detainee operations. The change in Canadian methodology in Panjwayi District had a direct impact on the Detainee Transfer Facility during this time: there were more detainees taken by Canadian units than ever before and the DTF was at capacity. DFAIT, expressing concern about some aspect of NDS operations, stopped the transfers for some time, which significantly contributed to this build up. That situation led to the Canadian DTF operating as a "front" in the war, in the same way Sarposa Prison had been back in 2008.[90]

Certain detainees exhibited behaviour leading the DTF staff to believe they had undergone conduct after capture training. Furthermore it was evident that these insurgents had been briefed on what exactly to do if captured and specifically by Canadian forces. These particular individuals knew beforehand how to exploit the Canadian and Red Cross complaints processes so that they could remain at the DTF rather than being transferred to the Afghan NDS. Investigation of these complaints took a great deal of time which permitted the detainees to recruit and proselytize among the DTF population. The delays also gave them a form of rest and relaxation from the rigors of life under fire in Panjwayi district or on the ratlines: the food was better and they had access to medical care. In all of the cases investigated, nothing was found to permit a longer stay in Canadian custody and they eventually were transferred to Afghan custody.[91]

The Canadian handover of the Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit led to the stand up of the TK Kandahar Health Service Unit (HSU). The HSU consisted of 187 personnel, of which 50% were deployed forward in Panjwayi District, while the rest worked at the Role 1 in the Canadian lines and at the now U.S. Navy-led Role 3 MMU where the second in command was a Canadian lieutenant colonel. By 2011 all Canadian military medical connections with non-government organizations, Afghan government organizations, or the hospitals in the city were severed: Canadian medical personnel could not visit Mirwais Hospital unless they were in civilian clothing. Village Medical Outreach was a thing of the past. The decision was subsequently made to focus all efforts on Panjwayi District and

at Kandahar Airfield. Even Afghan army mentoring tasks fell away as the Canadians prepared to leave. That said, the medics in their TLAV ambulances continued with their lifesaving work right up to the end in June 2011.[92]

Operation PASS RAFTAN: Panjwayi District, November-December 2010

If Operation BAAWAR was to succeed in eliminating the enemy salient in the Horn of Panjwayi, it was crucial that the local population, district government, and commercial entities had freedom of movement. As we have seen in 2008, establishing a small number of undermanned strong points along a dirt road paralleling these communities was not enough. As we have also seen, efforts to pave Route Hyena West ebbed and flowed depending on TF Kandahar priorities. Now, with Operation BAAWAR, both conditions were going to change. There would be adequate security coverage of the zone. This time the road would go all the way from Bazaar-e Panjwayi and it would be expanded and paved as a deliberate operation. Once both objectives were achieved, the threat to eastern Panjwayi district and the spillover effects on Dand district would theoretically diminish. With the Reg Desert to the south, CTF Strike to the north, and a sliver of land to the west, the enemy had nowhere to hide. He would no longer be able to operate his parallel government and would not be able to mass produce homemade explosives for distribution.[93]

Of BAAWAR's many components, clearing, building, and then protecting the road network itself was complicated enough, so much so that a sub-operation, PASS RAFTAN, was formulated (see Figure 8-8). And there were other complications. Parts of the Horn occupation force were not going to be under TF Kandahar's command. Some of the movements had to be made in partnered form with different Afghan units and even formations. And there was inevitable political friction which required high-level involvement. Governance in Panjwayi was sub-optimal. Furthermore, the relief in place by 1 R22eR Battle Group took place just as Operation PASS RAFTAN started.[94]

The situation on 20 November was thus: The PASS RAFTAN plan was being briefed in several venues. An American infantry company from CTF Strike was in Zangabad awaiting a relief in place. The supporting infrastructure for the build up of forces to go into the Horn was complete out to Sperwan Ghar. A recce troop from Recce Squadron moved to OP Khyber, while an Afghan infantry company quietly moved into Sperwan Ghar. Then coordination planning with the Afghan army ground to a halt as they paused for the Eid holiday.[95]

Major Eric Landry's C Squadron, now augmented with enough forces to become C Squadron Combat Team, stepped off from Ma'Sum Ghar and headed west along HYENA on 28 November: clearance commenced at OP Khyber while an airstrike killed an IED emplacement team from the Zarqawi Network just down the road. In addition to the three

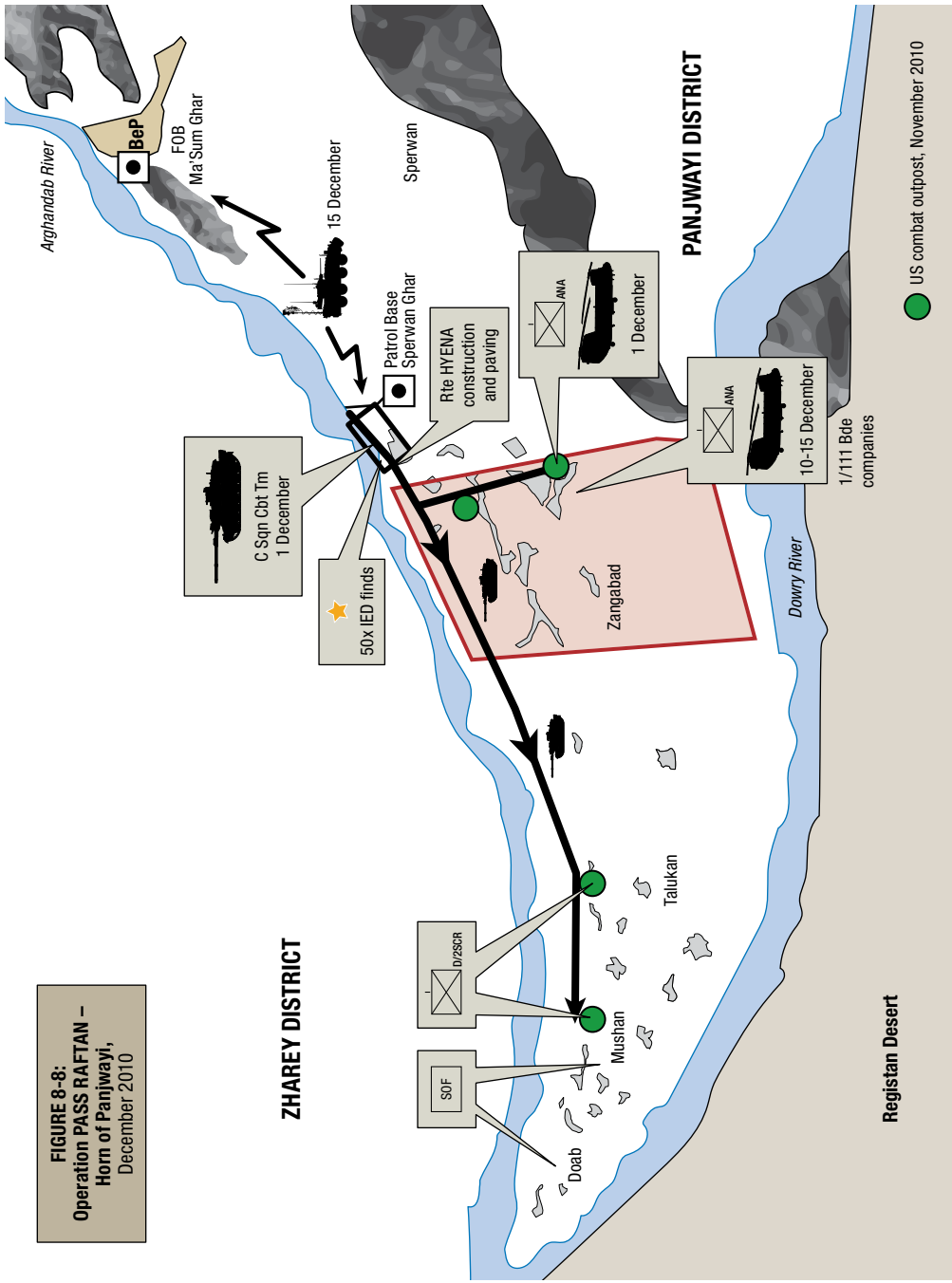

FIGURE 8-8:
Operation PASS RAFTAN – Horn of Panjwayi, December 2010

Figure 8-8: Operation PASS RAFTAN – Horn of Panjwayi, December 2010

varieties of Leopard tanks there were three Badger Armoured Engineer Vehicles and a troop of combat engineers from 52e Escadron, an infantry platoon in LAV III, and a company of Afghan army from 2nd Kandak, plus mentors. A Leopard 1C2 equipped with rollers led, with a Badger AEV scraping behind with its blade. A dismounted infantry platoon backed up with combat engineers cleared the two flanks; they were each followed by a Badger. The rest of the combat team followed. Behind them was an EROC suite of vehicles, and then behind that were the construction engineers from the TF Engineer Regiment and 22 Naval Construction Regiment. The Canadian EROC was joined by an American Route Clearance Package and the two teams swept Route Hyena West behind the construction effort twice daily.[96]

On the night of 29–30 November, D (Dog) Company, 2–2 Stryker Cavalry Regiment, deployed with two special forces ODAs and two ANCOP companies into Mushan and Talukan to replace the CTF Strike units holding down those villages. On 30 November, Maj Pierre Leroux and A Company 1 R22eR boarded CH-47 Chinooks escorted by Griffon weapons teams, and were inserted at Zangabad to relieve the Strike company there. There was no opposition. At the same time, CIMIC teams and Haji Baran were holding shuras in the communities along the eastern end of Route Hyena West to acclimatize the population with the road construction plan.

By 1 December, the force cleared 500 meters and constructed 300 meters of road. There were five pressure-plate IED strikes on the Leopard roller tanks resulting in two mobility kills: the fifth strike had the main charge offset from the detonator to go off under the tank. There were fifty IED finds in this first cleared zone. Most were new pressure plates, with a scattering of anti-personnel mines in the adjacent fields.[97]

Moving west, C Squadron and CIMIC held a shura at Na'al Bazaar to see if any able-bodied men wanted employment on the road project. The reply was enthusiastically affirmative and 45 local men signed on. At the same time word came in that the Afghan army released 1st Kandak from 1-111 Brigade for operations in Panjwayi. 450 men from 1-111 Brigade arrived at Camp Hero near Kandahar Air Field where they prepared to deploy to the Horn for three to four months.[98]

On 5 December, Chinook helicopters arrived to withdraw the American company at Zangabad while Haji Baran, CIMIC, and PSYOPS arrived for a shura with the Zangabad community leadership. After years of Taliban indoctrination and intimidation, the local leaders were completely terrified that they would be tortured or killed. The shura was used to message the elders: Afghan forces were coming and they were there to stay. The local leaders were, not surprisingly, skeptical. That said, C Squadron was 1400 meters into the Clear and the builders were 750 meters into the Build on Route HYENA. At the same time, Dog Company worked on its tactical infrastructure in Mushan and Talukan.

Photo Credit: Author

Photo Credit: Author

The tank squadron led by Maj Éric Landry was the spear point of Operation PASS RAFTAN. Working alongside the combat engineers, with their rear lines of communications covered by Maj Christian Caron's Recce Squadron, the force eventually reached Mushan.

Dog Company, which consisted of two mechanized infantry platoons in Stryker combat vehicles and a Mobile Gun System platoon, patrolled with the ANCOP police in the immediate communities and maintained surveillance on their stretch of unimproved Route Hyena West. There was still no contact with the enemy.[99]

The deliberate operations by C Squadron Combat Team panicked the insurgent leadership in the Horn so much so that their behavior made them more vulnerable to SOF operations. On the night of 2 December the insurgent commander in the Horn was captured and two of his main subcommanders in the Mushan area were killed. The Canadian assessment was that these actions seriously degraded any possible response to Operation PASS RAFTAN by local enemy forces, and it would take a long time for them to regroup, perhaps months. Follow-up strikes within 72 hours took out three more leaders in the Talukan-Zangabad area as they attempted to organize resistance to C Squadron Combat Team.[100]

Unfortunately one of the SOF raids went into District Chief of Police Azim's grandmother's house in Talukan. This action produced a crisis of credibility between Azim and the population of Talukan, and between Azim and the coalition forces in Panjwayi. Who was using his grandmother's compound for nefarious activities? How did that connect to the insurgency? And how did all of this connect to Azim? These questions were left unanswered for the time being, but the overlap in economic and political interests in the Horn re-emerged as the coalition forces delved more deeply into such matters using tools like the Human Terrain Team and other forms of White Situational Awareness. The old Ishaqzai-Noorzai blood feud from 2007 was in danger of being re-animated with potentially negative consequences for the coalition effort.[101]

The planned airmobile move of the 1-111 Brigade kandak was now put on hold. Commander 205 Corps no longer supported the plan, which prompted intervention by BGen Milner, Col Gosselin, and Maj Gen Terry, the incoming Regional Command (South) commander. As a result, the insert was put off for several days. This posed a significant problem. The 1-111 Brigade kandak was supposed to relieve parts of 2nd Kandak as well as to occupy Mushan, Talukan, and Zangabad. This annoyed Brig Gen Habibi, who applied pressure on 205 Corps to get sorted out. Habibi was forced to order the exhausted 2nd Kandak to deploy one of its companies to backfill along Route Hyena West. The delay was just as well: gravel trucking capacity dried up so no construction was possible until the contractors were sorted out. And that meant getting the Engineer Regiment's Engineer Construction Squadron involved.[102]

Photo Credit: Author

The scene of many actions dating back to the fierce battles of 2006, the now derelict northern part of the village of Pay-e Moluk was eventually bypassed when Route Hyena was reoriented.

Photo Credit: Author

This grape drying hut between Zangabad and Talukan was converted into a strongpoint by Taliban fighters. The position was taken out by several 120mm rounds from a Leopard 2 as C Squadron Combat Team advanced down Route Hyena.

By 8 December, the wait was still on for the 1-111 Brigade kandak. All of the Canadian and American sub-units patrolled and conducted shuras in their respective areas of responsibility. The following day, with the gravel turned back on, a cumulative total of 1800 meters of Hyena West was cleared and 1300 of it constructed. The non-deployment of 1-111 Brigade forces meant that LCol St-Louis had to detach part of Maj Frédéric Pruneau's Para Company, who were holding down Bazaar-e Panjwayi, and send them to backfill on Route Hyena West. By this time, the tactical infrastructure built by Engineer Support Squadron was in place. Four new combat outposts were added: Bennedson in Mushan; Robinson in Talukan; Old School in Zangabad; and Palace just north of Zangabad. Combat Outposts Bennedson and Robinson housed Dog Company, a pair of special forces ODAs, and two Afghan National Civil Order Police companies. Both proceeded to implement the first stages of the Afghan Local Police initiative. Combat Outpost Palace held a platoon from A Company and an Afghan infantry company. Combat Outpost Old School, which previously housed the Taliban court and parallel governance structure, now had two platoons from A Company, an Afghan infantry company; snipers; CIMIC; OMLT; and a pair of American ODAs.[103]

Eventually, after substantial pressure on the Afghan army, Canadian Chinooks were permitted to transport the first companies from the 1-111 Brigade kandak in Zangabad on 10 December. The other companies were not permitted to deploy to Talukan or Mushan. It was thus left up to the ANCOP and their special forces mentors to redeem Afghan honour: they quickly bagged a Taliban commander near Mushan.[104]

LCol St-Louis took note of the social atmosphere in Zangabad.

> The population was, like, this is 2008 all over again. This is not going to last. Oh, the Americans came in in November, now they're leaving, the Canadians are taking over. We've seen the Canadians here before, they're going to leave again, just wait. It's the "just wait" attitude, that [the insurgents] are going to hurt them and they're going to leave. Around the Taliban court in Zangabad, everyone around us is, like, "It is a matter of time before you will leave, you will not stay here." And the people around get intimidated and are being told, "Wait in two months, wait in two months …you will be back under our control." So we spent most of our time in Shuras and in meetings and every engagement is that we are here to stay. We are building a road, we are building FOBs, we are building infrastructure because that is what the government and you have said you wanted to be linked to Kandahar City and we're coming here with enough combat force to do it. That was the one thing Conrad Mialkowski, Jerry Walsh and Jo Paul did not have. We had three kandaks, they had one.[105]

It took the insurgents over a week to respond to Operation PASS RAFTAN. During this time C Squadron encountered more and more IEDs. A CU-170 Heron spotted an enemy emplacement team, but they dispersed before M-777 guns from batterie X could engage. The enemy crew escaped north into Zahrey but were not acquired by CTF Strike. Another enemy dig team tried to IED the road near OP Khyber but were driven off with 25mm fire.[106] Throughout the period Maj Barb Honig's Engineer Construction Squadron and the TF Engineer Recce Troop moved back and forth along Route Hyena West, monitoring progress and exerting quality control on the construction process. By 11 December 2500 meters of road had been cleared and 1650 meters constructed.[107]

Photo Credit: Author

Once Mushan was retaken during Operation PASS RAFTAN, Afghan National Civil Order Police moved in followed by Canadian CIMIC officer Capt Ali Raju (right), who added this vital community to his beat.

The road effort went beyond just plowing the ground flat and then crushing gravel onto it. Existing structures had to be taken into account and if they were in the way, their owners had to be compensated if removed. These efforts involved the Engineer Construction Squadron, CIMIC, PSYOPS, as well as district-level governance. At the same time, Maj Landry and his headquarters assimilated ISTAR reportage on compounds of interest along the route. Where were the historic IED factories? The strong points? Madrassas?

If a compound had history, it was given extra scrutiny or even raided by C Squadron Combat Team's infantry, with the Leopards in support.[108]

As PASS RAFTAN progressed down Route Hyena, Maj Christian Caron's Recce Squadron pulled out from their observation posts in eastern Panjwayi and took over patrolling Route Hyena West between 15 and 18 December. Based out of Sperwan Ghar, the armoured soldiers in their mixed bag of Coyotes, LAVs and TLAVs were responsible for maintaining a 24/7 presence and asserting freedom of movement from Bazaar-e Panjwayi to the point where C Squadron Combat Team was operating. At night Recce Squadron set up Coyote observation posts, supported by the LAV Remote Weapons System vehicles and their advanced sensors. During the day, they escorted convoys of gravel trucks and maintained a mobile presence. Engineers constructed Access Control Points along the road that were variously manned by Afghan troops, police or civil order police. Dog Company with its Mobile Gun System platoon, worked west of C Squadron Combat Team conducting over watch.[109]

Backing all of this up was the "Road repair mitigation project." Maj Dan Lemeroux deployed Captain Ali Raju and a CIMIC team to work with C Squadron Combat Team to conduct quick impact projects up and down the road to connect with the population to keep it on side. The CIMIC team also worked to build the CIMIC capacity of the Afghan units along the road. That project significantly contributed to the reduction of insurgent activity in the rear as the road progressed westward.[110]

By 15 December the 1-111 Brigade kandak, now working with A Company and Canadian CIMIC, mounted a major cordon and search operation in the Zangabad area, which took the locals by surprise. The day after this operation a senior Noorzai elder from a respected family in the Zangabad area stepped up and "offered to create a map for the [staff of the District Coordination Centre] with names and boundaries of specific landowners in order for ISAF not to be double-charged or deceived by claimants."[111]

Developments were marred by a series of IED explosions on 18 December. While clearing a compound on Hyena West, Cpl Steve Martin from Para Company tripped an IED and was severely wounded. As his mates moved to extricate him, a secondary device detonated, wounding another soldier. As the platoon cleared a helicopter landing zone, they triggered a third IED, producing another casualty. Cpl Martin died of his wounds.[112]

Haji Baran and CIMIC were brought up to interact with the local elders. There was considerable open debate at this shura and all parties agreed that the buildings around the mosque would be destroyed but the mosque itself would remain in place and the road routed around it. C Squadron Combat Team and the engineers isolated the compound and destroyed it, leaving the adjacent mosque untouched. The local population approached the force and told them they were pleased the compound that the insurgents used was finally gone.[113]

The Canadian, Afghan, and American companies and platoons aggressively patrolled their local communities and conducted shuras at every turn. Mushan's community was split: there was simmering hostility but a lot of people welcomed the return of coalition forces. The Zangabad communities were, surprisingly, open to interaction. Talukan was not and their community leaders remained intimidated. C Squadron Combat Team was now four kilometers away from Talukan when they ran into another spate of IEDs which held up movement for 24 hours as the engineers cleared them. The insurgents probed Dog Company in Mushan with a couple of 'shoot n' scoot' events that produced no damage.[114]

By Christmas Eve, the force had cumulatively pushed four kilometers west from OP Khyber, of which 3300 meters of that was now a gravel road. The plethora of IEDs, however, slowed down clearance so construction assets were diverted to improve an access road from Hyena West to Combat Outpost Old School in Zangabad. By 28 December 500 meters of that route was cleared and 300 meters graveled.[115] Recce Squadron and CIMIC handed out winterization materials to the local population in the Sperwan-Pay-e Moluk area. The 1-111 Brigade kandak finally relieved an exhausted 2nd Kandak, which pulled back and regrouped to work with Maj Pruneau's Para Company in the Bazaar-e Panjwayi-Haji Habibollah area. The only other contacts consisted of some discouraging fire directed against enemy spotters in the Zangabad area.[116]

Operation PASS RAFTAN's effects were measurable. By the end of the month IED finds, as opposed to detonations, were up significantly.[117,118]. Haji Baran, the District Support Team, CIMIC and PSYOPS conducted shura after shura along the route to gauge local buy-in to the program. The pattern that emerged for the assessment staff was that the initial shura in a given area was tentative but when a second one was held, the actual local power brokers emerged:

> Today the [District Support Team] was summoned by the district governor and 14 elders from the Zangabad area. According to the elders, the construction of the new road is negatively affecting 50 families and does not follow the agreed-upon plan. They claim they want the old road to be paved and that is all. When asked why they were not present yesterday at the shura hosted by the DG, they claimed not to have been aware of the event. It is unclear why none of the locals in attendance at yesterday's shura raised any complaints about the road. The elders that came today are without a doubt the landowners or powerbrokers of the area but do not live there since they were clearly not farmers. Later the [district governor] came to see the DST and it was agreed that a future shura with mass representation of locals, local elders, ISAF, and [the Government of Afghanistan] would be necessary to solve the Hyena road conflict.[119]

As the road progressed westwards, its construction was increasingly related to money, prestige, and influence and less and less about the insurgency. That in itself was a measure of progress. By the end of December the insurgency was pushed back into the community of Do Ab, at the westernmost tip of the Horn. The surviving enemy leadership reconstituted and connected with their associates to the north in Zharey district. A SOF operation into Do Ab captured another emergent enemy leader which further degraded the enemy's position.[120]

Events in the Horn produced higher order effects on the overall insurgency, however. The Quetta Shura convened and ordered its commanders to return to Kandahar in January instead of March or April. Hafiz Majid, the de facto Taliban military leader for Kandahar by this point, was a key figure in these deliberations. He was furious about the coalition forces' progress and wanted an all-out effort to retake lost areas. There was, in his view, "no current safe base of operations in Kandahar Province from which significant insurgent operations can be staged." Apparently, Majid

> specifically referenced targeting Canadian forces for two reasons: a) to try and entice them to give up the fight and leave earlier than the planned withdrawal in July 2011 and b) tarnish the reputation of Canada and the Canadian forces for their inability to succeed in Afghanistan and increase security.[121]

The implications were dramatic. At no other time since 2006 had the enemy's intent towards Canada been this clear, nor had it ever been so explicitly connected to a geographical location and the operations being conducted in it. The enemy was going to do everything it could over the next six months to disrupt what the Canadian Army and its allies accomplished in Panjwayi and Dand districts. It was as if a gauntlet was thrown down in front of TF Kandahar by Hafiz Majid and the Quetta Shura. The Canadian Army was being called out, as it were. Cabinet benchmarks, signature projects, and any form of long-term development became irrelevant in this arena.

Achieving Steady State: Dand District, Spring 2011

The success of all three lines of operations in Dand district was increasingly apparent as each week passed. Dand was no utopia: there were a handful of kidnappings and IED events over the course of three months including an IED attack directed against District Governor Nazek. However, the improvements in the district were such that Dand faded away from the Canadian narrative by February 2011 as the Afghans in the district progressively asserted more and more control over their destiny. The governance mechanisms were overhauled using Afghan Social Outreach Program funding to establish a new District Development Council and replace the development assembly. BGen Milner could report that "the level

Photo Credit: Author

Photo Credit: Author

The Engineer Construction Squadron led by Maj Barbara Honig was responsible for working with Afghan communities to repair and augment the crucial irrigation system and expedite road paving. Both efforts played a significant role in improving the day-to-day lives of the residents of Dand and Panjwayi districts during the course of 2011.

of more direct involvement of international actors in district governance has decreased and now meetings are led by Afghans … Governance in Dand District represents the high-water mark in my area of operations."[122] Similarly, "the ability of the [Government of Afghanistan] to extend the delivery of basic services continues to improve. Development is increasingly seen as a natural follow-on from the successful security operations over the past several months."[123]

TF 1-71 Cav and 7th Kandak 7, it seemed, were everywhere. The troublesome Hendu Kalache community was now under direct supervision and was no longer a seam the insurgents could escape into. Enemy activity completely dropped off.[124] This was in part due to effective operations in Malajat led by the new provincial Chief of Police, Col Abdul Rezziq of Spin Boldak. The Malajat operations took some of the pressure off of northern Dand, which TF 1-71 Cav and 7th Kandak exploited.[125] By January village representation grew across the board, except in the community of Nakudak which remained psychologically intimidated by the insurgents. And, just as Lt Col John Paganini and the Cavalrymen from TF 1-71 Cav handed over to 1-2 Stryker Cavalry Regiment in February, they could report that: "Demonstrating a significant improvement in the security situation, there are many aid agencies (international and non-governmental organizations) operating in Dand [so much so] that the villages have become swamped with aid packages. While there may be some cross-over between projects, we see the increased presence of NGOs as a very positive sign."[126]

By spring 2011, any observer driving through Dand saw the following after moving through the arid wasteland of Daman district north of Kandahar Air Field: The graveled and graded but not yet paved Kandahar City Bypass was now in use. On arriving in Dand, the roads were all paved and the abrupt transition was obvious. Electrical infrastructure in the form of transformers and lines was immediately evident, as were the green fields being tilled. The mosques on the route were all freshly-painted and had elaborate minarets and new loudspeaker systems. The brick kilns, of which there are over a hundred, all belched smoke and there were meters and meters of new bricks being taken away by contractors driving relatively new vehicles. There was vehicle traffic of all types on Dand's roads, from bicycles to tuk-tuks, to truck traffic. Small roadside businesses abounded: bicycle repair shops, motorcycle repair shops, corner stores with foodstuffs. There were a few but discreet police checkpoints. The schools on the route had by this point children playing at recess. There was a feeling of security as there was no overt evidence of war in the form of IED damage or destroyed vehicles, nor was there an 'in your face' security presence. In other words, all manner of visible life and economic activity was underway in Dand. If success existed in southern Afghanistan, Dand District came the closest to resembling it in the spring of 2011.[127] Panjwayi, on the other hand, was another story altogether.

Achieving Steady State: Panjwayi District, January 2011

It is unsurprising that governance problems continued in Panjwayi district given Haji Baran's connections to influential elements in the Kandahari political structure and the insurgency. ISTAR reportage focusing on Baran and these connections proved troublesome. For example, the new Chief of Police Mohammad Azim, it turned out, was a life-long friend of Baran and that connection went back to their fathers being friends. Both men, apparently, had some long-term personal relationship to the infamous Taliban commander, Hafiz Majid. Majid apparently contacted both men on occasion to try and get some of his captured commanders released.[128] Baran's involvement in detainee releases eventually became common knowledge in Panjwayi district. A Canadian assessment noted with some concern that, connected to this "Locals believe that coalition forces do not want the war to end and are purposely not detaining or killing insurgents in order to prolong the war."[129]

The implications stemming from the fact that Haji Baran had been in communication with Majid and perhaps other insurgent leaders for some years were just too massive for all involved to ignore. Baran's removal was considered by BGen Milner as a pre-requisite for success in the district and efforts along these lines started immediately in September 2010. Crippled by the loss of Canadian influence mechanisms at the provincial and national level, Milner worked quickly with his 'virtual PRT' (Cyr and Martin) to examine alternatives. Maj Gen Nick Carter at Regional Command (South) was also interested in the situation and pledged his support. After substantial consultation with the District Support Team and other interested entities, Milner and his staff focused on recruiting Haji Fazluddin Agha as a possible replacement. 'HFA', as he was known, had his own money; he was from Fatollah; he was connected to the Karzais and had been a campaign manager for the family; and, crucially, he had local support. Milner worked with Carter to gain Governor Wesa's and Ahmad Wali Karzai's assistance. Milner's connections with Col Serge Labbé in Kabul provided a venue to access President Karzai, who eventually supported Baran's replacement with Haji Fazluddin Agha.[130]

Initially it looked like HFA would take over in October and he even started attending various shuras at that time. Agha also developed a good relationship with Nazek over in Dand. Baran, however, held on as long as possible. October became November, and then December. Baran remained in charge, despite all assurances to the contrary. The possibility of his replacement actually galvanized Baran, who was suddenly proactive and cooperative in the Route Hyena improvement shuras. Wesa now changed his mind, for whatever reason, and the handover stalled out. Finally, in early January, President Karzai signed off on the change and Baran was out.[131]

The accession of Haji Fazluddin Agha to the governorship of Panjwayi District was a major sea-change and proved to be a major enabler for the remainder of Canada's involvement there. Engineer Construction Squadron commander Maj Barbara Honig, experienced at dealing with development issues in Kandahar going back to 2007, noted that once Haji Fazluddin Agha took over, "things changed in *days*!".[132] Even a hardened man like Panjwayi power broker Haji Mahmood, according to CIMIC leader Maj Dan Lemeroux, "almost started to cry" when the change was announced and Haji Fazluddin Agha insisted that stunted and atrophied mechanisms like the District Development Assembly and Community Development Councils be re-animated.[133]

These changes coincided with the evolution of the joint district coordination centre, the OCC-D(P). The OCC-D(P) became the "central hub for security, governance, reconstruction and development." It now included the District Support Team (DST); the policing efforts; and mentorship of the line ministries operating in Panjwayi. Maj Montreuil, the Task Force Kandahar Stability Team Leader, now worked closely with Tom Schakow from the US Department of State; Andy Golda from USAID (and a survivor of the BLOWTORCH 61 shootdown in 2010); and Joffre Leblanc from DFAIT. The DST was to "empower the District Governor's Office." The overall mission: conduct a Hold of the district "while building host nation capacity" with the ultimate objective of handing over the functions to "Host Nation Officials."[134]

By January the coalition forces in Panjwayi were deployed in the areas of operations they would occupy for the next several months. There was Dog Company, two ANCOP companies, and four special forces ODAs operating in Mushan and Talukan. A Company, batterie X, and the 1-111 Brigade Kandak handled Zangabad and Sperwan Ghar. C Squadron Combat Team, Recce Squadron, part of 2nd Kandak, and all of the engineering units lived in temporary bases along Route Hyena as construction made its way west. Para Company and the remainder of 2nd Kandak occupied and patrolled the area around and south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi. Maj André Girard's B Company was responsible for the greater Nakhonay area, while Maj Christian Marquis and C Company covered the Chalghowr-Salavat-Mohajerin zone, also known as the "Triangle of Love". Both companies in the east worked with 6th Kandak (see Figure 8-9).

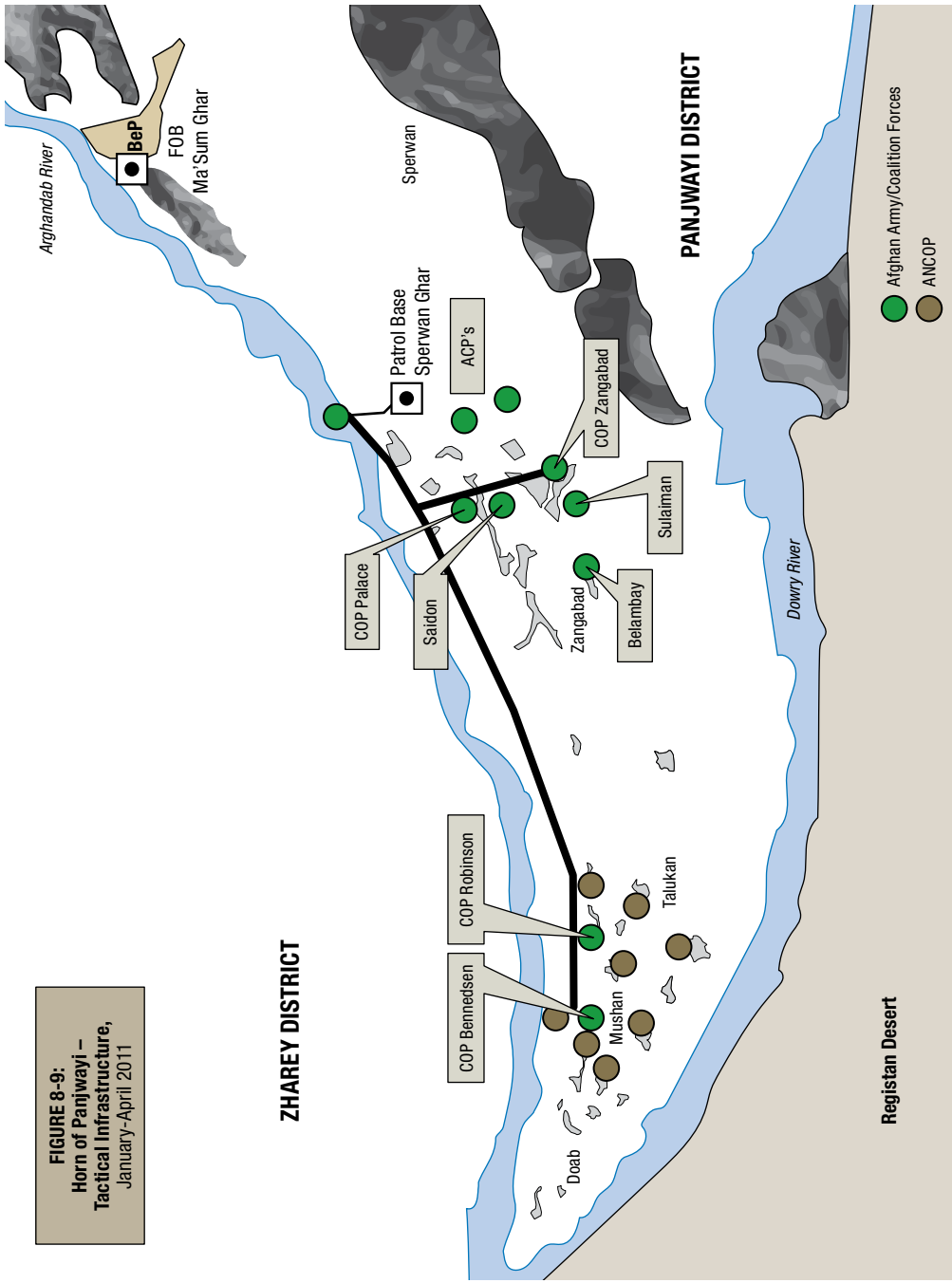

FIGURE 8-9:
Horn of Panjwayi – Tactical Infrastructure, January-April 2011

Figure 8-9: Horn of Panjwayi – Tactical Infrastructure, January-April 2011

These dispositions permitted LCol St-Louis to implement the 1 R22eR Battle Group concept of operations. Having observed the past three rotations and now possessing a significantly different ratio of forces, St-Louis's objective was to deepen the new Hold as quickly as possible using the guidelines "Combat-Convince-Construct". Credibility with the population, especially in the newly-occupied Horn, was crucial. BGen Milner was prepared to add governance 'connective tissue' and CIMIC programming once contact was established with the communities surrounding each population centre. The partnering aspects of the operations came to the fore here.[135]

At the same time

> I had so much infrastructure, so much real estate, that I needed to secure, [and this] convinced me that there's no room for battle group operations. There's no room for one company fixing, one company striking, pincer movements. I cannot let go of a place to regroup to strike something. First of all, there is no enemy group of 30 folks that I need to strike … So everything has to be done at the company level. And furthermore, I am convinced that it even has to be delegated to the platoon level … So, from the start, CIMIC is part of the battle group, the same for PSYOPS … If I have CIMIC, it's down to the company battle-space owners. If I have snipers, and they are required, they are given to the battle-space owner.[136]

A whole new structure emerged whereby the joint district coordination centre, the OCC-D(P), became the link between the company commanders and the District Support Team. This also applied to Maj Honig's Engineer Construction Squadron and the plethora of other capabilities that were being brought to bear: the squadron now had four Engineer Construction Teams, one of which was assigned to each company. The idea was to push all forms of capabilities and capacities as far down the chain of command as possible and, not by coincidence, this paralleled efforts at the Community Development Council level in the communities.[137]

For example, Combat Outpost Nejat had a Canadian infantry platoon from Para Company; an Afghan infantry company from 2nd Kandak; and a CIMIC and PSYOPS detachment. Frequent patrolling in the Nejat area led to contacts at the community level which a team from Engineer Construction Squadron could connect to and apply infrastructure improvement resources. If larger projects in other areas were of interest to the local population, the company commander communicated with the OCC-D(P) linked to the stability team, which in turn was linked to the development deconfliction process surrounding the District Governor. On higher-level matters involving provincial line ministries, like education and medical care, TF Kandahar J9 got involved if required. Or if the force of personality was required, BGen Milner got involved.[138] LCol St-Louis noted that:

> We were there for eight months, and my challenge was not to fix the [governance] framework. My challenge is to make a family that's living in Salavat feel more secure, that's it … if something is not working in a district for whatever reason, then you move to something else. If I cannot deliver a road between Sperwan Ghar and Bazaar-e Panjwayi because we can't agree to the trace, okay, I'll turn around and deliver a school in Salavat. If I cannot deliver a new irrigation cleaning system because we're not paying the right people, I don't waste time trying to find the right people. I turn around and focus on Route Hyena. But you add all these efforts together; you add these to more presence. I wasn't there for a year and half as a consultant from Korea to make the governor work properly. I have eight months to win a political narrative that is positive.[139]

LCol St-Louis was not beguiled with the more idealistic aspects of nation building. Having spent two tours with UNPROFOR in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, he had dealt with dangerous, ungrateful populations and political complexity from an early point in his career. The failures at Srebrenica and the humiliation of the Canadian Army being ordered to surrender to Croatian forces in 1995 without a fight motivated him to prevent a repeat performance in Afghanistan.[140]

Enemy activity and coalition operations broke down into the same four general areas of Panjwayi as before: the Horn; Bazaar-e Panjwayi and points south; the Triangle of Love, and the greater Nakhonay area. In the Horn, operations were split between Dog Company; the armoured squadrons and engineers on Route Hyena; A Company in Zangabad; and American SOF working on village stability operations, ANCOP, and leadership targeting that overlapped all of Horn in the areas of operations. All four groupings were partnered with the Afghan army and police. The level of enemy activity in January was relatively low. The outpost at Talukan was shot up and a day later there was an attempted engagement involving an insurgent checkpoint south of Talukan. Spotted by a CU-170 Heron, the enemy dispersed before air support could arrive. The bulk of activity was around Zangabad, with a pair of IEDs in the zone between Zangabad and Route Hyena, and some small arms fire directed against road crews. Maj Leroux's A Company and an Afghan company from 1-111 Brigade conducted several cordon and searches in the area based on local information, which uncovered a surprising number of IED components. A pair of engagements involving UAV's spotting small numbers of insurgents were unresolved because positive identification was lost in the dense terrain[141] (see Figure 10 and Figure 10a).

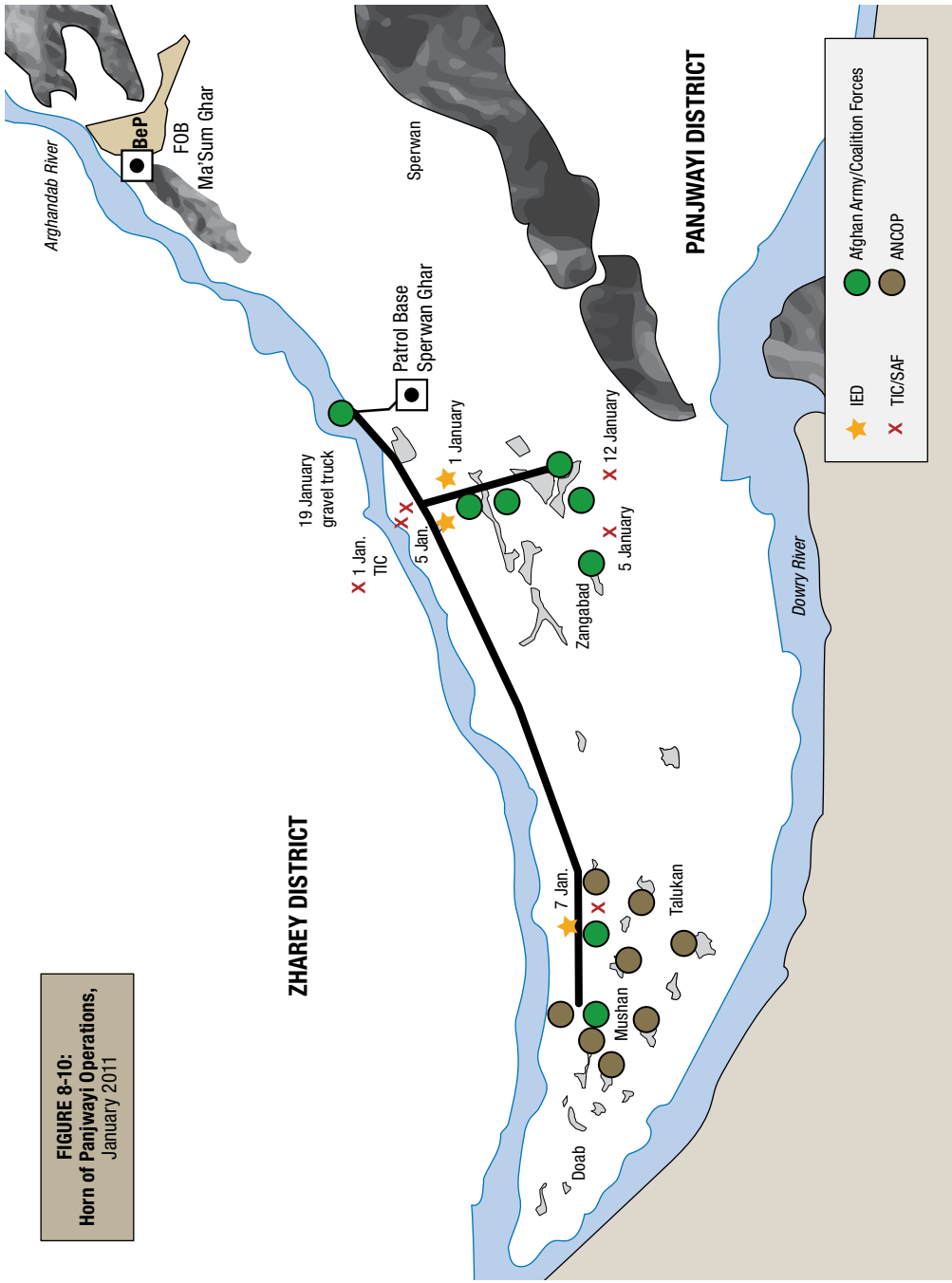

FIGURE 8-10:
Horn of Panjwayi Operations,
January 2011

Figure 8-10: Horn of Panjwayi Operations, January 2011

Figure 8-10a: Eastern Panjwayi District Operations, January 2011

Intimidation of civilian gravel truck drivers supporting Route Hyena construction then emerged as the next challenge after trucks were shot up on several occasions. Two drivers were also discovered murdered in their cabs. The enemy also probed Zangabad facilities from the south, resulting in a small TIC on 12 January. These probes from the south indicated that the insurgents had been pushed south out of Zangabad and Talukan but were caught between the populated areas and the Reg Desert and in the process of defining new operating zones.[142]

Para Company experienced no reported enemy activity in January, even though contact was expected during a clearance operation south of Nejat. C Company in the Triangle of Love experienced an IED strike on 16 January and a pair of TICs outside Chalghowr and Fatollah. The TIC near Fatollah lasted twenty minutes with the immediate reaction force unsuccessfuly attempting to cut off the ambush party. C Company and 6th Kandak launched Operation SHAR PAK west of Chalghowr, producing a small cache and little else.[143]

B Company and 6th Kandak applied significant disruptive pressure on the greater Nakhonay area, so much so that the enemy was only able to detonate a single IED in mid-January. Working together, the Canadians and Afghans mounted the MARD KALA series of operations in Kenjakak and operations LUNDI JANOUBI and BARAH SEEKA in Rigway. Some of these operations involved airmobile insertions of Canadian and Afghan troops using the Canadian helicopter force. In all cases compounds were swept for caches and an enemy medical station was uncovered. Five company-level surges throughout Nakhonay in one month produced no contact and no retaliatory action.[144]

The Canadian development focus in Panjwayi outside of the Horn was Salavat. This community became an influence arena in which the coalition and the insurgency fought it out with almost no kinetic activity. When the Salavat school was nearly completed, problems emerged:

> Despite recent security gains, efforts to expand [Government of Afghanistan] provided educational services in Panjwayi have been stymied by a lack of community buy-in (particularly in areas where local residents are affected by lingering insurgent influence and intimidation). For example, the newly refurbished school in Salavat is ready to be opened but has been delayed owing to concerns that the elders of the community would become a target. A shortage of teachers and the lackluster engagement by the district Ministry of Education representative are the other factors influencing the slow provision of [services].[145]

This lingering insurgent influence, in combination with the Afghan government's lack of credibility, kept the people of Salavat on the fence. The Salavat elders said their town should have a school when a school could open in Chalghowr, indicating that they wanted

proof that the insurgents would not return even in small numbers, let alone as an occupation force. The Canadian assessment was that Salavat, Nakhonay and Haji Habibollah were all high-risk areas in the struggle for influence. The enemy did not need a strong force or presence to keep these communities on the fence and off balance.[146]

Indeed, the provision of government services that Dand enjoyed with operations like KALAY did not seem to work in parts of Panjwayi. TF Kandahar noted, however, that there was no NGO buy-in to Panjwayi, and the NGOs were influencing the provincial government: "NGOs permit the [Government of Afghanistan] to extend services that they cannot, largely due to insufficient capacity. There has been….very little in Panjwayi district owing to security concerns."[147] The new District Governor, Fazluddin Agha, did, however, bring his expertise to bear. His priority was to implement a rehabilitation project for the canals that linked Zalakhan, Salavat, Nakhonay, and Chalghowr. This project would connect the communities and the district-level government on a number of levels, and hopefully lead to movement in other areas. The Engineer Construction Squadron looked into activating such a project with TF Kandahar funding. From TF Kandahar's perspective there were over 1500 local men already working under cash-for-work projects elsewhere in the district and there was no reason why that number could not be increased as the summer fighting season approached.[148]

Reorganizing Special Operations Forces Support and Village Stability Operations

Though most SOF activity lay outside of TF Kandahar's scope of operations, there were several new developments with a variety of partners that affected Canadian operations in Panjwayi district. ISAF commander McChrystal had by this point re-organized, or at least rationalized, SOF command and control in Afghanistan so it could interact and coordinate with conventional operations more effectively. TF 373, the Tier I SOF unit that hunted enemy leadership targets, became TF 310 and significantly ramped up operations in and around Kandahar province. The Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force Afghanistan, the non-NATO multinational SOF organization, shifted its role from disruptive operations conducted in the outlying districts into Village Stability Operations in specific villages. ISAF SOF continued with lower-level leadership targeting. TF 310 and ISAF SOF went after the "head" while CJSOTF went after "the body".[149]

TF 310 mounted operation after operation in western Panjwayi during this time and, unlike its predecessor organization, had significantly better coordination with units on the ground, in this case the Canadian battle group. The Village Stability Operations, however, became the bailiwick of Special Operations Task Force 58 (SOTF 58), based around

a company from the Canadian Special Operations Regiment. SOTF 58 assessed Dand and Panjwayi districts for future operations in March 2010. There was almost no coordination with the battle group initially.[150]

As we have seen earlier, the introduction of Village Stability Operations or VSO by American special operations forces was already underway in other parts of Afghanistan. VSO, as we will recall, was a program designed to introduce self-perpetuating community-level Afghan security at the lowest possible level of governance, and then connect those communities to district, provincial, and national levels of government. At some point in mid-2010 the decision was made to include a Canadian contribution to VSO operations in Kandahar province. The Canadian Special Operations Regiment, CSOR, was given this task.[151]

As has been demonstrated throughout Volume II, one of the primary problems confronting outlying Afghan communities was their susceptibility to insurgent intimidation, be it night letters, kidnappings, sporadic presence, or constant presence. Even if the Taliban could not maintain a presence, it could still induce fear with other methods. The UN-supported DIAG processes had effectively eliminated any possibility of maintaining a local militia back in 2005, while the German police training system failed to produce enough functional police to maintain law and order. The Afghan Development Zone strategy and the population-centric strategies associated with protecting Kandahar City essentially abandoned outlying communities, which in turn forced the uncommitted populations onto the fence or into embracing insurgent parallel governance. As the Afghan security forces and ISAF moved to increase their influence in, or re-take those areas, something had to be done to address this particular problem.

It was understood in coalition circles that implementing VSO everywhere was impossible. It was also understood that there were coordination issues related to the long-term problems between NATO ISAF and the American special operations organizations that were part of a separate command structure. VSOs were supposed to be used in areas that Afghan or ISAF forces could not operate or were not operating in.[152] Experiments in Zharey district were not going well, and the VSO mounted by American special forces ODAs there was unable to generate significant local interest. However, the situation was different in Arghandab district, where VSOs were conducted alongside conventional forces. Significant numbers of Alikozais joined the Afghan Local Police initiative that was part of the VSO operating construct. By the fall the results were considered successful enough to attempt similar operations in Panjwayi district.[153]

Of note, the command relationship also changed, making the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force Afghanistan subordinate to Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command Afghanistan, and then both American-led commands developed

Photo Credit: Author

Special Operations Task Force 58 handled the Canadian component of Village Stability Operations (VSO) associated with asserting government control in the Horn of Panjwayi.

an operational control relationship to ISAF.[154] Though this did not alleviate all of the command and control problems, it allowed for informal relationships to develop between both conventional and unconventional formation headquarters. TF Kandahar under BGen Milner thought that VSO could play a positive role in Panjwayi district and facilitated the relationships between the various conventional and unconventional entities involved.[155]

Village Stability Operations in Afghanistan were essentially historically-based processes that had been used during the Cold War. A company-level advance operating base was first established by the special operations forces to support the teams that would operate in the designated area. Over time, the teams, usually based on a section-sized detachment sortied out and made contact with the communities surrounding the base. It was understood that not all communities would welcome contact with a team. Those that did so were the recipient of aid. Over time rapport developed between the team and the community until they were invited to live in the community. From that point incremental steps were made to convince the local authorities to connect to the district-level government and access its programs,

while at the same time local training in self-defence using locally-vetted people ramped up. The ideal state was to have a village militia that was able to protect village authorities from intimidation, and these authorities maintained their stature in the community by bringing in development programs to build on the aid projects. The ultimate goal was to have the village militia to contribute to a district-level or provincial-level offensive counterinsurgency force.[156]

A similar process was followed by CSOR in Panjwayi district. A great deal of effort was invested in the Shape phase of the operation by the team. A key difference was that CSOR and its American counterparts worked alongside a partnered force, in this case the ANCOP companies that were allocated to the Hold part of the Horn of Panjwayi plan. Operating adjacent to American ODA teams and by now deconflicting with the battle group, CSOR focused on one particular cluster of villages overlapping with A Company's area of operations.[157]

Overall the idea was to deepen the Hold and move the communities towards Build. There was no CIMIC detachment in the CSOR team but there was one member who had CIMIC training. He plugged into the CIMIC team working with A Company.[158] SOTF 58 also accessed the Commanders Contingency Fund for small low-level projects. In time the team was able to connect with an NGO that specialized in agricultural support. In many ways, the CSOR team and its Afghan associates was an armed Community Development Council.

One of the most important discoveries uncovered by the CSOR team was that there were really two groups of people who governed in the villages: there were the absentee elders who lived in Kandahar City, and what the team called 'proxies', that is, the local 'face'.[159] The mullahs and the mirabs were not absentee leaders but without the elders, things simply did not get done as effectively. The Canadian team made a significant effort to identify who and where the absentee elders were, and then through the OCC-D(P) connect with district governor Haji Fazluddin Agha to bring them back for shuras that affected the community and its development.[160]

Raising an Afghan Local Police contingent in the community was more problematic and took time. Ultimately a selected, vetted militia received AK-47 weapons from the district chief of police. The ALP handled point security, roving patrols, and local checkpoints. Because of its local knowledge, the ALP detachment essentially became a sensor that fed ISTAR processes, both Afghan and coalition. When operational and connected to the chief of police, information flowed to the OCC-D(P) and the District Centre. The presence of the CSOR team and its efforts working with the local population contributed to targeting data against the insurgent leadership array in the Horn. This information was acted upon in a positive and effective fashion by other forces.[161]

The CSOR team's partnered element, however, changed three times during its deployment in the Horn which led to some discontinuity. ANCOP units rotated and an Afghan army Commando Platoon came in. This platoon (and its two successor platoons that rotated in and out) was not fully trained, so the CSOR team acted almost as an Embedded Training Team or as an OMLT for a time. Operations became increasingly kinetic as the summer drew near. As the transition from 1 R22eR Battle Group to the incoming American battalion took place in June, the Canadian team was shocked to learn that A Company was being replaced by an American platoon, and that platoon was not 'enabled' in the same way in terms of CIMIC, PSYOPS, engineers, and ISTAR resources. The Canadian team leader, in retrospect, noted that the operation stayed in the Hold phase, with some forays into Build, but as the situation became increasingly kinetic, it shifted firmly back to Hold. Transition was never really a possibility once the larger protective forces were reduced and the local police had to stave off increased enemy activities. In the end, the CSOR team was the last Canadian combat unit to redeploy from Panjwayi district in July 2011.[162]

CSOR operations as part of the Village Support Operations program in Panjwayi district can best be categorized as experimental. The operations were relatively small in size and in scope, the effects were not measurable during the period in which the Canadian team deployed, and the whole engagement was time-limited by the Canadian pull out in July 2011. One can only speculate what the effects of VSO-like operations would have been had more resources been allocated to them earlier in the conflict and in critical areas west of Kandahar City.

Panjwayi District Operations, February 2011

The momentum of operations generated in December and January accelerated in February. Though the level of violence steadily increased and the types of violence changed, there was substantial, measurable progress in the coalition effort across the district as a whole (see Figure 8-11 and Figure 8-11a).

The level of enemy activity in Panjwayi was extremely low in eastern Panjwayi, with a single TIC recorded at the end of the month near Folad. In the greater Nakhonay area, there was an IED strike near Combat Outpost Pul at the start of February which wounded an interpreter, and then two TICs at the end of the month: one a 'shoot n' scoot' against COP Pul and the other a situation where a pair of insurgents pinned down an Afghan patrol from 6th Kandak resulting in close air support and smoke missions to extricate the patrol. A similar state of affairs existed for Para Company in Bazaar-e Panjwayi and points south. The Horn was another matter altogether. There was a spate of TICs and IEDs in the first week of February but by the end of the month these were augmented with a significant kidnapping and intimidation campaign. The Horn hotspots included the area between

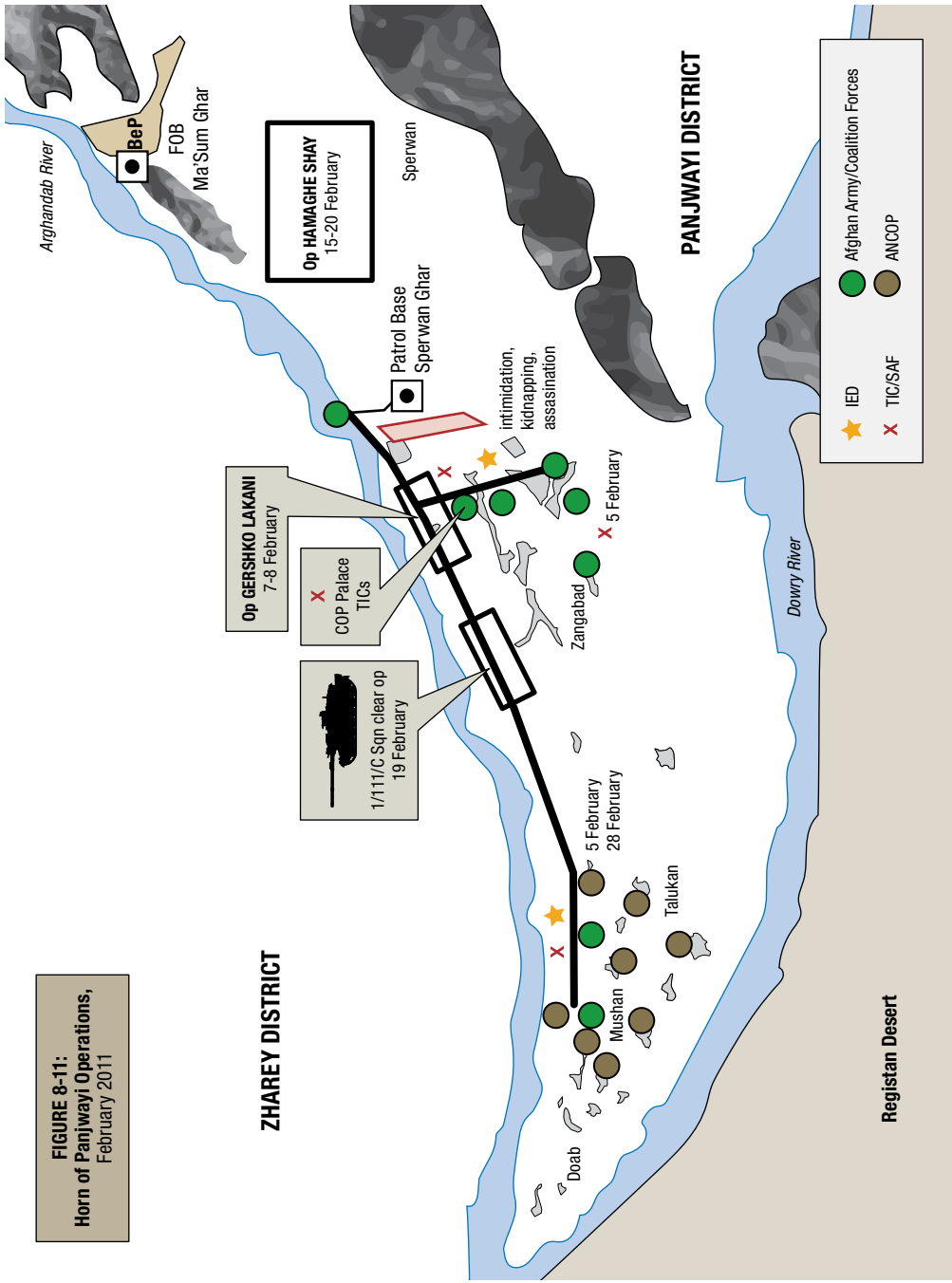

FIGURE 8-11:
Horn of Panjwayi Operations,
February 2011

Figure 8-11: Horn of Panjwayi Operations, February 2011

Figure 8-11a: Eastern Panjwayi District Operations, February 2011

Talukan and Zangabad; the combat outpost at Zangabad; and intimidation operations around Pay-e Moluk near Sperwan Ghar. Very little was happening in and around Mushan (See Figure 8-12).[163] According to Canadian analysis, there were three insurgents groups in the Horn: one west of Do Ab, and two out of Lakani and Grandari in the centre. There was also a small cell operating south of Nejat and another in Kenjakak.[164]

During the course of the month, and in keeping with 1 R22eR Battle Group's distributed posture, the infantry companies partnered with their associated Afghan infantry companies and mounted multiple concurrent cordon, search and sweep operations in their respective areas of operations. For example, C Company bounced between Salehan and Chalghowr. B Company moved up and down the Adamzai Chain. Para Company mounted a series of dismounted operations in Haji Habibollah-Nejat and Bazaar-e Panjwayi. All of these operations involved local police. Dubbed Operation TAYRA TAYGH (the battle group iteration was HAMAGHE SHAY), the overall intent of TF Kandahar and 1-205 Brigade as expressed through 1 R22eR Battle Group and 6th Kandak was to manoeuvre to collect, and then act on local information at the lowest level possible. The results were nothing short of startling.[165]

Operation TAYRA TAYGH produced an average of eight cache finds per day throughout the Panjwayi district area of. These were not the large insurgent arms dumps of the past consisting of 80 RPG rocks buried in sealed 55 gallon drums, or racks of AK-47 assault rifles. These were all local caches consisting of, for example, enough IED components for five weapons, or a handful of mortar rounds, or several boxes of PKM ammunition. The enemy's distributed logistics system had been identified and stripped away - at the local level. These small caches were found almost exclusively through local people reporting them out to the security forces. And the discoveries did not stop for weeks.[166] Even over in Salavat, the local population had enough of whoever was intimidating them and revealed enemy caches to C Company.[167]

As a sidebar, changes in how the combat engineers handled IED response played a role in reducing the number of IED attacks at the patrol-level. There were simply not enough engineers to accompany each patrol and, in the past, combat engineers inexperienced in counter-IED methods had incurred casualties. One response during this rotation was to deploy LCMD hand-held detectors on each foot patrol: infantry could be trained to use it and did not require a qualified engineer. If a device was detected, it was marked and specialists were brought in to deal with it. Similarly the contract K-9 teams were also distributed instead of being held at the squadron level. The dispersal of hand-held detectors and dog teams also assisted in uncovering caches by the foot patrols.[168]

FIGURE 8-12:
Enemy Dispositions and Activity,
2011

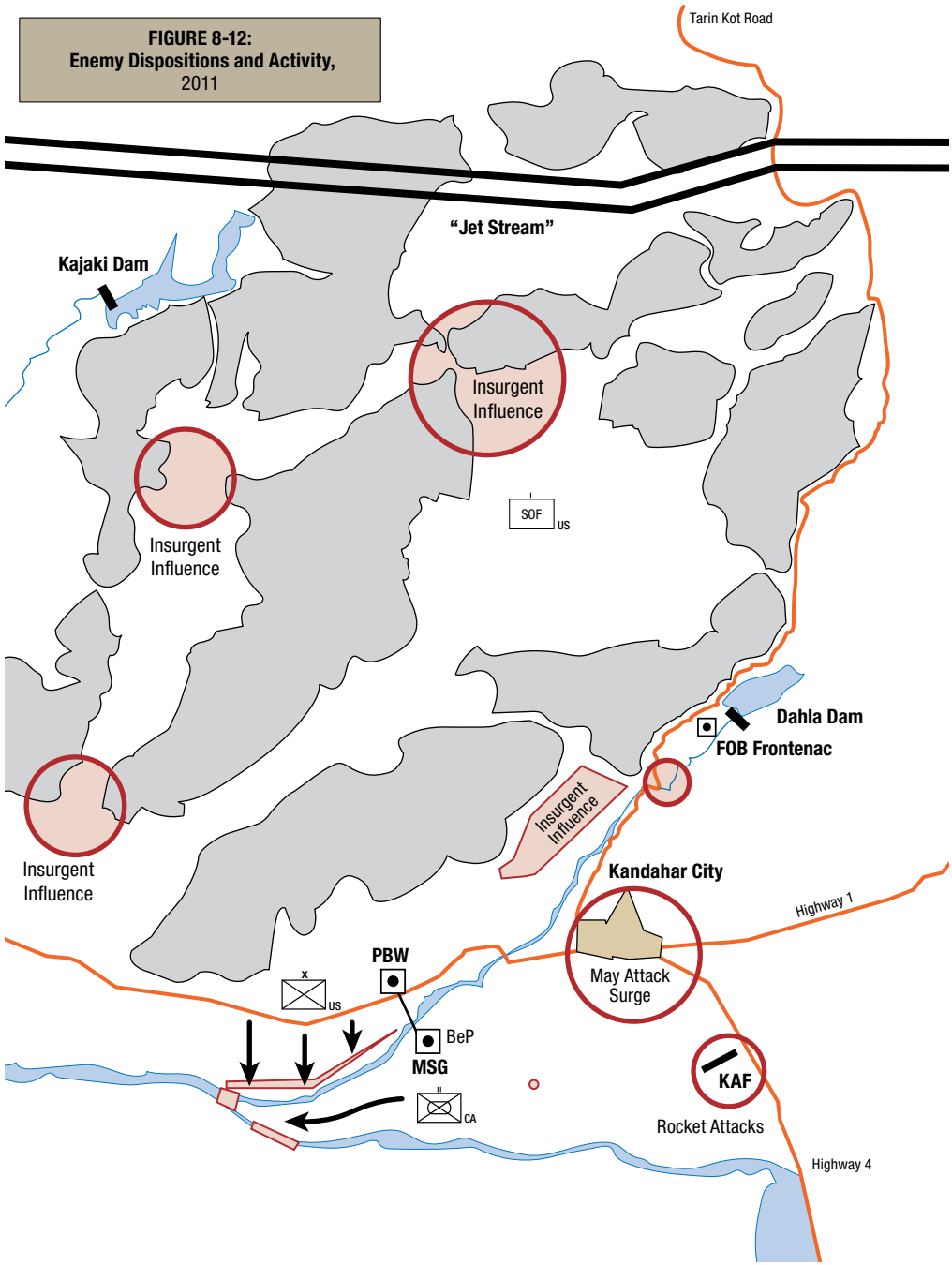

Figure 8-12: Enemy Dispositions and Activity, January-April 2011

The insurgents were extremely frustrated with their supply problems. The infamous Jabbar Agha pushed his sub-commanders in the Horn to sort things out. They were further alarmed that Haji Fazluddin Agha was now District Governor. Agha's son had been killed by one of the insurgent leaders years ago and this was one of the factors motivating him.[169]

Haji Fazluddin Agha was everywhere, "a force across the district. He continued to enunciate a clear vision and has been aggressive in pursuit of this vision, both in messaging and in action."[170] There was substantially more organization at the district-level, as noted by the District Support Team, and the effects of this were palpable in eastern Panjwayi. The connection between canal clearance, irrigation, wheat production, and security was evident and thus more resources were applied to the waterways. The local population responded and indicated it preferred TF Kandahar, USAID, and CIDA development in this area to other entities, which by implication meant the provincial government, line ministries, or NGOs. A school in Chalghowr was now a real possibility and with that, the Salavat school issue might be resolved.[171] However, word was out that some of the Salavat elders had connections with the insurgency and might interfere with development there. Further information led to the belief that one elder had a direct connection to Taliban leader Mullah Omar, but nobody seemed to know how or why.[172]

Over in the Horn, the District Governor worked with CIMIC, the District Support Team and the other organizations dealing with Route Hyena as it moved west. The problem areas here involved poor irrigation planning as the road progressed, which annoyed local landowners and farmers. CIMIC, and the TF Engineer Regiment connected with the local Mirabs, the irrigation mediator-experts. This was in part facilitated through the District Governor. The importance of solving that issue was paramount, with growing season on the way, and TF Kandahar wanted to stave off any possibility that the insurgents would exploit fresh grievances.[173]

As the road progressed, however, the sticking point became the community of Talukan. Dog Company and C Squadron Combat Team ran into one Gullum Mohammad Khan, an elder from Talukan who very publicly whipped up the population into opposing the direction of Route Hyena. Khan claimed the road was only for ISAF and that there was no local benefit to it. He told the people that the Afghan government was being forced to build the road by ISAF. Haji Fazluddin Agha, BGen Milner, and LCol St-Louis held a shura to meet with the locals but to little effect. "Other elders disagree but are either unwilling or simply too afraid to disagree with him publicly. Unfortunately, no single elder can speak for the entire Talukan village and no single power broker has emerged as a leader…."[174] The District Governor stepped up and told TF Kandahar to keep building the road and by-pass the Talukan bazaar. Canadian CIMIC, PSYOPS, and the American special forces ODA worked to win over the Talukan population and mitigate the effects of

Photo Credit: Author

The contentious Salavat school. For reasons known only to themselves, Taliban leaders allocated disproportionate efforts to interfere with its activities.

Agha's decision through mosque refurbishment, working with the bazaar shopkeepers to pressurize Khan with a petition, and other measures. The reality of the situation was that Khan owned the land the bazaar was on and did not want Hyena to bypass it: he wanted a land claims settlement for the destruction of the bazaar. The District Governor enforced the bypass and suggested the construction of a new bazaar. Khan was sidelined, the community got a new bazaar, and Route Hyena continued on its way.[175]

It is not surprising, then, when there were a pair of TICs in February in and around Talukan. Was Khan Talukan's equivalent of Haji Malim? That was unclear. There was an enemy group operating between Talukan and Zangabad: There had been TICs and an IED attack against A Company and its associated Afghans in and around Combat Outpost Palace, so it was unclear that there was any connection between these events. C Squadron Combat Team went in and cleared a suspected enemy bed down area and destroyed all of the compounds except for the mosque.[176]

For the rest of the month, it was IED find after IED find, cache find after cache find, shura after shura, and, as the battle group staff put it, "rinse and repeat". COP Palace tended to attract enemy attention to some extent but the enemy main effort was intimidation. Word spread that an ISAF gravel truck driver killed a local child: PSYOPS countered that this was not true. Two kidnappings, and assassination attempt against an elder, and the use of hijacked mosque loudspeakers to spew forth anti-government propaganda indicated that

the enemy was not or could not achieve his objectives with brute force and had to resort to this form of targeting to stay in the game. These activities were, in fact, counterproductive for the insurgents. Elders of at least three major communities in the Horn came forward with information on the insurgents. And, more importantly, the District Support Team excitedly noted that there were three new bazaars operating: Zangabad, Talukan, and Mushan. That doubled the number of active bazaars in western Panjwayi. Somebody was doing business. And that business was flourishing because of the improved security and ground access.[177]

Photo Credit: Author

The increased emphasis on joint foot patrols in Panjwayi District led the insurgents to place more and more anti-personnel mines on trails. The distribution of handheld detector systems to the section level permitted patrols to deal with these devices on a case-by-case basis.

By the end of February, the insurgency leadership's outlook was gloomy. The Quetta Shura was keeping a close eye on events in Panjwayi and of course throughout Kandahar province. An estimated half of the Quetta Shura voiced dissent with the future course of actions. That sentiment expressed itself thus: "The Taliban have been fighting against coalition forces and the Afghan government for too long and have lost many good men in battle….they would not succeed in defeating the enemy this year."[178] Apparently, however, the Taliban was being mentored by another entity who clamped down on this dissent and presented a plan for 2011 dubbed BLACK STORM. This plan focused on retaking lost ground in Kandahar City, Dand, Arghandab, Zharey, and Panjwayi districts.[179]

Meanwhile, the people of Pay-e Moluk, a village near Sperwan Ghar, were either succumbing to insurgent intimidation or sending a message of their own to the security forces:

> The pattern of life in the village was drastically different from all previous patrols with the villagers staring with disgust, turning their backs away from the patrol, and children threw rocks. This may be an indication of upcoming insurgent operations in the area. Another patrol was dispatched to Pay-e Moluk where an irrigation project is ongoing. The villagers chose to work without any security to appear unconnected to ISAF and the patrol was told to leave.[180]

The Sperwan area communities were suffering from a loss of credibility related to a Canadian bureaucratic slow down in funding approval that originated in Ottawa and that took most of March to sort out.[181] Until that issue could be addressed, the situation would remain static, at best.

Panjwayi District Operations, March 2011

B and C Companies, 6th Kandak and OMLT personnel working in eastern Panjwayi district conducted day-to-day, low-level patrolling followed by regular company-level surge operations in their constituent communities. This activity was supported by increased police activity stimulated by the district chief of police and the P-OMLT. These operations became so frequent for the rest of 2011 that describing them all in detail becomes repetitive. Suffice it to say, they all had similar effects: there were constant small cache and IED finds, the local population provided more information as time progressed, and the level of enemy activity in the eastern communities was dramatically lower than at any time in 2010. For example, in March 2011 there were four IED incidents and three TICs reported for the entire month. Most of the IEDs were detonated by EROC vehicles so it was not clear if these were merely legacy devices or if there were new 'players' in town. There was a single engagement using ScanEagle and MQ-1 Predator, but the missile missed and the enemy dispersed. However, one of the three fatal casualties suffered by 1 R22eR

Battle Group during their tour occurred at this time when Cpl Yannick Sherrer was killed by an IED on 27 March in Nakhonay. One other IED incident in Nakhonay wounded two other Canadians and an interpreter (see Figure 8-13 and 8-13a).[182]

During this time, the Engineer Construction Squadron led by Maj Honig worked on numerous projects in eastern Panjwayi. The ECS assessment was that the lack of movement on many projects was due to the lingering after-effects of the Haji Baran days. Village leaders believed that ISAF was an agent of Haji Baran and would not cooperate. Now, with Haji Fazluddin Agha in charge, and with better information dissemination by the district government, things changed significantly. The Community Development Councils in the Triangle of Love area were inert during Baran's tenure either due to his presence as district leader or because of local fractures or both.[183]

To get the population engaged, Engineer Construction Squadron worked with the District Governor on irrigation systems. ECS pushed down mapping teams to work locally in order to determine how the communities moved water from point to point. That information was passed to CIMIC, who also engaged at the community development council level, and then showed the community leaders how to connect to the district-level development personnel. The parallel structure of Engineer Construction Squadron-CIMIC-District Support Team, and the OCCD-(P) facilitated this process until they could back away and the Afghans communicated their own requests for Cash for Work or other programming that could be used to clean up the canals. Road construction and paving paralleled the irrigation activities, using the same mechanisms but with Commander's Contingency Fund money as other program monies from other entities was not made available. The communities received better water and ground access, better agricultural opportunities through the USAID program at the district level, local men were employed, and violent activity dropped off.[184]

Chalghowr initially remained a problematic area for development and, like Salavat, the local leadership was backsliding on the school issue, claiming the level of security wasn't where it needed to be. Countering with the Afghan Local Police initiative, the District Governor was able to entice them with added security, but it was a slow process of building confidence after so many years of problems.[185] C Company, the Engineer Construction Squadron, and CIMIC worked together to identify who the Malik was. As it turned out, the Chalghowr Malik lived in Kandahar City and had not visited the community in three years. When this individual heard things were changing, he came back and worked with the development council and the Canadians. In time, this led to improved relations and then movement on the school problem, though there remained low-level insurgent intimidation in the community.[186]

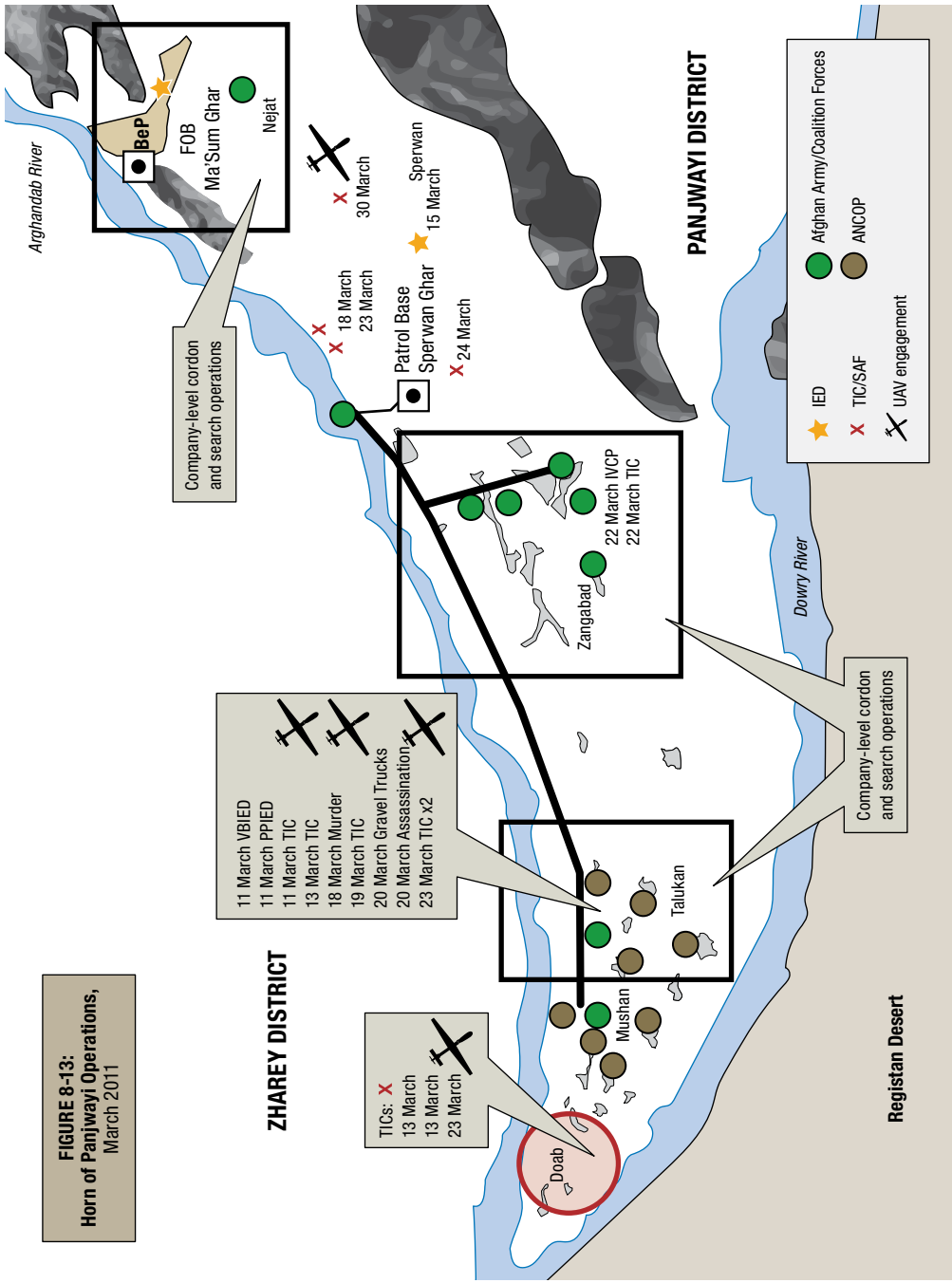

Figure 8-13: Horn of Panjwayi Operations, March 2011

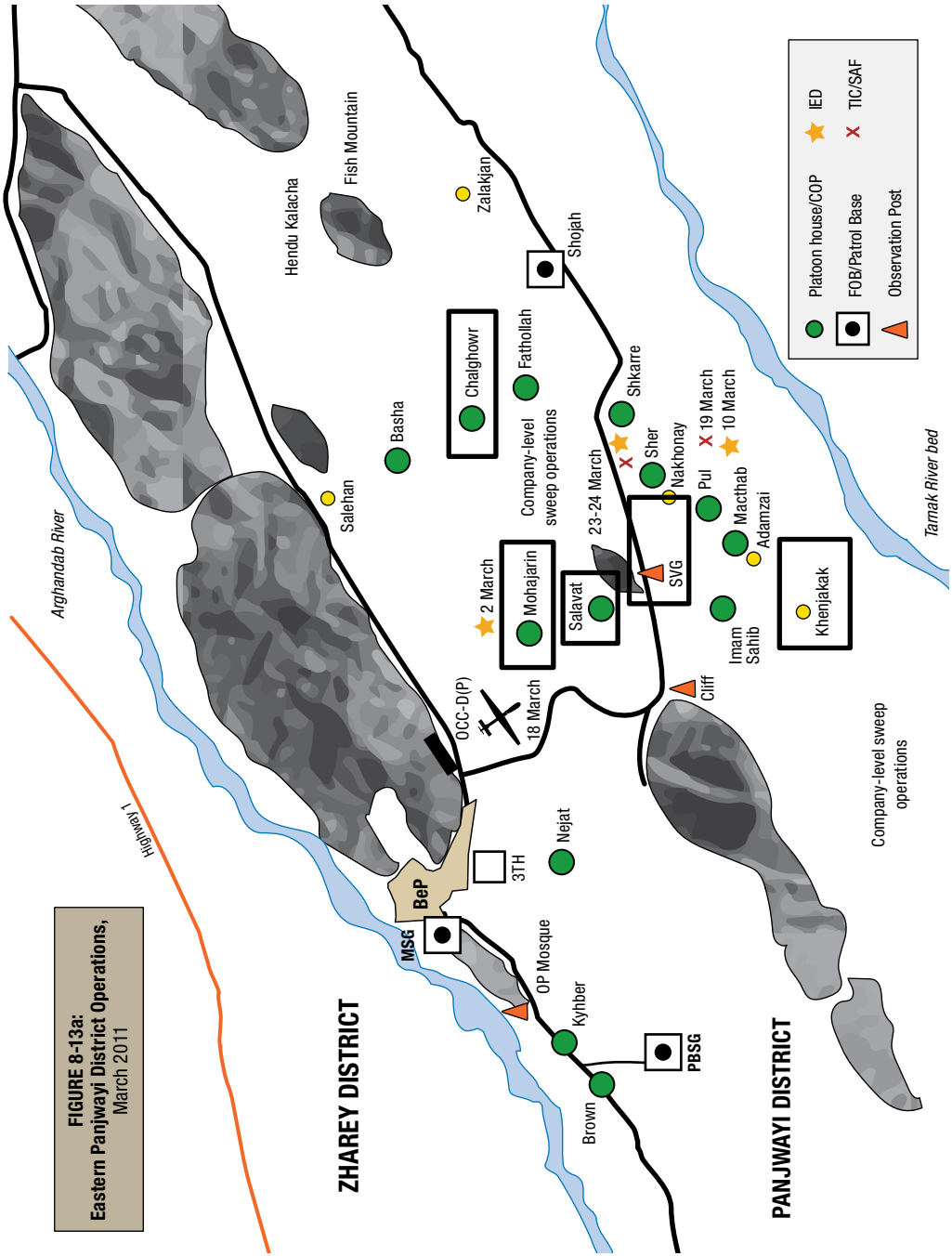

Figure 8-13a: Eastern Panjwayi District Operations, March 2011

Photo Credit: Author

A patrol base belonging to Maj Andre Girard's B Company located between Salavat and Chalghowr. The distribution of Canadian and Afghan security forces into this challenged area generated markedly higher levels of stability which permitted development and influence operations to flourish.

Para Company in the Bazaar-e Panjwayi-Nejat-Haji Habibollah area had similar experiences to B and C Companies. There was a single IED attack in the bazaar itself but a flood of police patrolling backed up by Para Company's Operation SHOPPING PEGASUS suppressed any further enemy activity. The insurgent remnants in the Para Company area of operations shifted to intimidation operations, as they could do little else. Local information was that two different teams were active: one from the Sperwan area, and another from Zharey district. Their impact was negligible and Bazaar-e Panjwayi continued to flourish. Intimidation operations were having an effect, however, on the fringes of Para Company's area of operations in the direction of Sperwan. A team of masked insurgents on motorcycles threatened to cut the ears off of anybody found working for ISAF. Enemy intimidation in that area started to intersect with similar operations in the Horn, and it was not surprising that the enemy was using the seam between the Canadian and Afghan units working out of Sperwan Ghar and those in Nejat.[187]

Sperwan Ghar was shot up on three occasions from insurgents operating in this area and there was an airstrike against an enemy team trying to IED Route Summerside. Road construction between Sperwan, OP Cliff and the New District Centre had been contemplated but the lack of resources and focus slowed the project down. Now there was increased

interest by the coalition forces and thus increased enemy attention in what coalition forces were doing in the area as EROC vehicles swept through with greater frequency. An IED took out an engineer vehicle, signaling the fact that Route Summerside was not necessarily open for business yet.[188]

The intimidation campaign was, as we have seen, extending into Pay-e Moluk and having a negative effect. The Malik of that community was kidnapped by a team of masked men, taken to a compound somewhere near Zangabad, and threatened. At that time, the Malik "managed to convince the insurgents that the work was being accomplished on a voluntary basis without pay or cooperation from ISAF."[189] On return, he met with Canadian CIMIC and asked that "all projects be halted, explaining that the security situation was unstable and that he fears for his life. The Malik was open to the idea of employing outsiders to work in Pay-e Moluk as long as it does not start immediately. He is supportive of ISAF projects and thankful for all that has been done and will continue to provide information on the situation in the village."[190]

After a few days, however, the Malik changed his views and was "ready to continue … he now realizes the benefits that these projects will have on the villagers."[191] In less than a week, the district chief of police mounted a police operation in the Sperwan Ghar area, using 20 officers to search a variety of compounds. He refused ISAF assistance, which was interpreted as a major step forward in the conduct of independent Afghan police operations.[192]

The usual 'shoot n' scoot' attacks continued against OP Khyber, to no effect whatsoever. There was slightly increased enemy activity around Mushan when a patrol from Dog Company was shot at and the Afghan police subjected to a drive-by shooting. The accompanying Canadian JTAC was able to get close air support which resulted in a pair of GBU-12 bombs dropped onto the insurgent position. C Squadron Combat Team deployed a quick reaction force but there appeared to be no enemy remains. Coalition forces activities in Mushan were now extended and focused on mosque refurbishment.[193]

The real hotspot in the Horn throughout March, however, was Talukan. As patrols from A Company, Dog Company, and the 1-111 Brigade kandak pushed out, they encountered sporadic insurgent checkpoint activity south of Talukan and Zangabad. Though it was difficult to define, it appeared as though there was some form of lodgment in between the coalition areas of operations and the Reg Desert. The types of enemy activity consisted of harassment and intimidation directed against civilian construction contractors working on Route Hyena. It appeared as though an enemy team from Zharey was involved, so C Squadron Combat Team and A Company mounted Operation DA PACARAY from 5 to 8 March along Route Hyena to clear the adjacent fields and sweep the compounds. The usual small cache finds occurred but there was no contact.[194]

Photo Credit: Author

The dispersal of 1 R22eR into platoon houses and section-level over-watch positions alongside Afghan security forces disrupted insurgent cells operating south of Bazaar-e Panjwayi. This is the view from UFO Hill to Three Tank Hill with FOB Ma'Sum Ghar to the left.

By this point the 1-111 Brigade kandak re-deployed and in turn 2nd Kandak moved out to fill the gaps. Then on 11 March there was a spate of IED activity in Talukan. A Dog Company patrol tripped a pressure plate IED producing one wounded and, on examination, EOD found a 40-pound homemade explosive charge that did not detonate. Later in the day a motorcycle rigged with an IED was used to attack another American patrol, wounding another soldier. A 'shoot n' scoot' against the Afghan police also took place, to no effect. A similar event occurred over at the coalition base in Zangabad. And, while CU-170 Heron UAV coverage was brought to bear, the observers spotted an enemy IED dig team near Combat Outpost Talukan: they were engaged by batterie X with 155mm artillery. The survivors were tracked by UAV into Zharey district. Another dig team was spotted and was engaged with machine gun fire but they dispersed.[195]

There were indicators that the insurgent teams had support from a series of compounds in the community near COP Saidon between Talukan and Route HYENA. A Company swept in to clear the area and wound up in a gunfight, during which a Canadian was wounded. The enemy group broke up and fled the area.[196]

Unable to gain traction in Talukan, the insurgents turned to murdering unarmed civilian gravel truck drivers who were working on Route Hyena. They also laid IEDs to catch first responders to these attacks.[197] The insurgents then overstepped themselves on 20 March when Haji Aya Mohammed, the Talukan Mirab and supporter of efforts to remediate Route HYENA irrigation efforts, was assassinated. Initially, the Talukan population was split: half were angry with the insurgents, and the other half angry with ISAF for failing to protect him. When the perpetrator, who was connected to an insurgent leader, claimed responsibility for the killing, it resulted in a backlash against the insurgents and the population tilted towards the coalition forces. As it turned out, Haji Aya Mohammed led the signing of a petition to get a school built in Talukan in addition to his Mirab responsibilities. Of note, the district chief of police announced that there would be a criminal investigation into Mohammed's death. This was deemed to be a significant change in attitudes towards law and order in Panjwayi.[198]

Over in Zangabad, the enemy had even less traction with the local population. The community leadership now swung to support the coalition forces and "expressed satisfaction with the improvements made to the local mosque and showed interest in a potential solar light project in the area." UAV coverage continued to spot and track small enemy teams and assist patrolling forces in bagging small caches.

By the end of March, almost all of the major Horn communities engaged with coalition forces in a variety of local development projects and the population's willingness to tolerate insurgent-generated insecurity was noticeably decreasing. And, as it had during the days of the Construction Management Organization and the Fosters Paving Project, Operation PASS RAFTAN created a microeconomy along the route that had a variety of spin-off benefits. Truck drivers needed lunch and water. An entrepreneurially-motivated individual noticed that people needed more gas now that they had a road to travel on and wanted to build a gas station there. These changes were noted by the CIMIC teams and arrangements made to assist such efforts, particularly in Talukan and Zangabad.[199]

Panjwayi District Operations, April 2011

Thus far, the enemy response to Operations BAAWAR and PASS RAFTAN was severely muted. Hafiz Majid's brief to humiliate the Canadian Army's effort was not coming to fruition by any stretch of the imagination and Majid felt the heat from the Quetta Shura. The infamous Jabbar Agha, scourge of Kandahar, was unable to get anything up and going in Panjwayi district. This inertia had to change, so more insurgent resources were thrown at the problem in April, that is, four months after Operation PASS RAFTAN started. The insurgency's failure to achieve any serious inroads in the Triangle of Love and even in the vicious pit that was Nakhonay was likely a testament to what was happening in the Horn. Again, that situation was not new.

Back in 2008 the level of violence in eastern Panjwayi was significantly less when coalition forces were operating in the Horn. In 2011 the enemy was unable to get around those forces to move east. As a result, Jabbar Agha and his subordinates were forced to confront the coalition where they could get at them: Mushan, Talukan, Zangabad, and Sperwan Ghar (See Figure 18-14 and 8-14a).

There were hints throughout March that the enemy was deploying four 15-man teams, a unit of 18 out-of-area fighters, three suicide bombers, and new leadership into the district. Working out of the Do Ab community in the west, these groups infiltrated the Mushan and Talukan areas. They also started to move into Regay and use it as a staging location, possibly so they could reinforce their efforts in Haji Habibollah and points east.[200]

As before, the battle group companies, their Afghan army partners, and the OMLT mentors mounted several company-level operations in their areas of operation, in addition to daily patrolling that took place at the platoon-level. During April, LCol St-Louis shifted B Company from Nakhonay to Sperwan Ghar. The American cavalry unit in Dand shifted its boundaries to include Nakhonay and was ensconced there by mid-month. This permitted greater saturation of the Sperwan communities, given that the 1-111 Brigade kandak had re-deployed. There were four 'shoot n' scoot' attacks on tactical infrastructure in Nakhonay throughout April, but they produced no significant casualties and did not deter the American and Afghan platoons from exerting a presence in the area.[201]

C Company and 6th Kandak continued to patrol the Triangle of Love between Mohajerin, Fatollah, and Chalghowr. There was residual intimidation in Chalghowr and reports of enemy leadership hiding there: on one occasion a Canadian platoon got into a shoot-out and captured one insurgent. There were ongoing CIMIC and construction activities as well. For the most part the triangle remained quiet. The exception was Salavat.

The Salavat School opening became an information operations issue that went beyond education and became a focal point of involvement by BGen Milner. Back in March insurgent intimidation resulted in a cell phone ban in the community, which alerted C Company that something was up. Chief of Police Azim Khan launched an independent operation into Salavat and arrested a number of individuals. His motives were suspect by some Canadian observers who thought Khan was engaging in arrests for monetary gain. That said, there were Salavat Afghan police links to the Taliban and Azim Khan may have been cleaning them up.[202]

Maintaining the coalition presence and positive projects in Salavat were important in that the Triangle of Love needed to be maintained to demonstrate to Nakhonay and its population that progress was possible. The other factor driving the schools issue was the belief held by both Milner and Haji Fazluddin Agha that there had to be a shift from unmonitored madrassas that were influenced by questionable mullahs to an education system that was not radicalized. And as we will see, there were larger issues in play.[203]

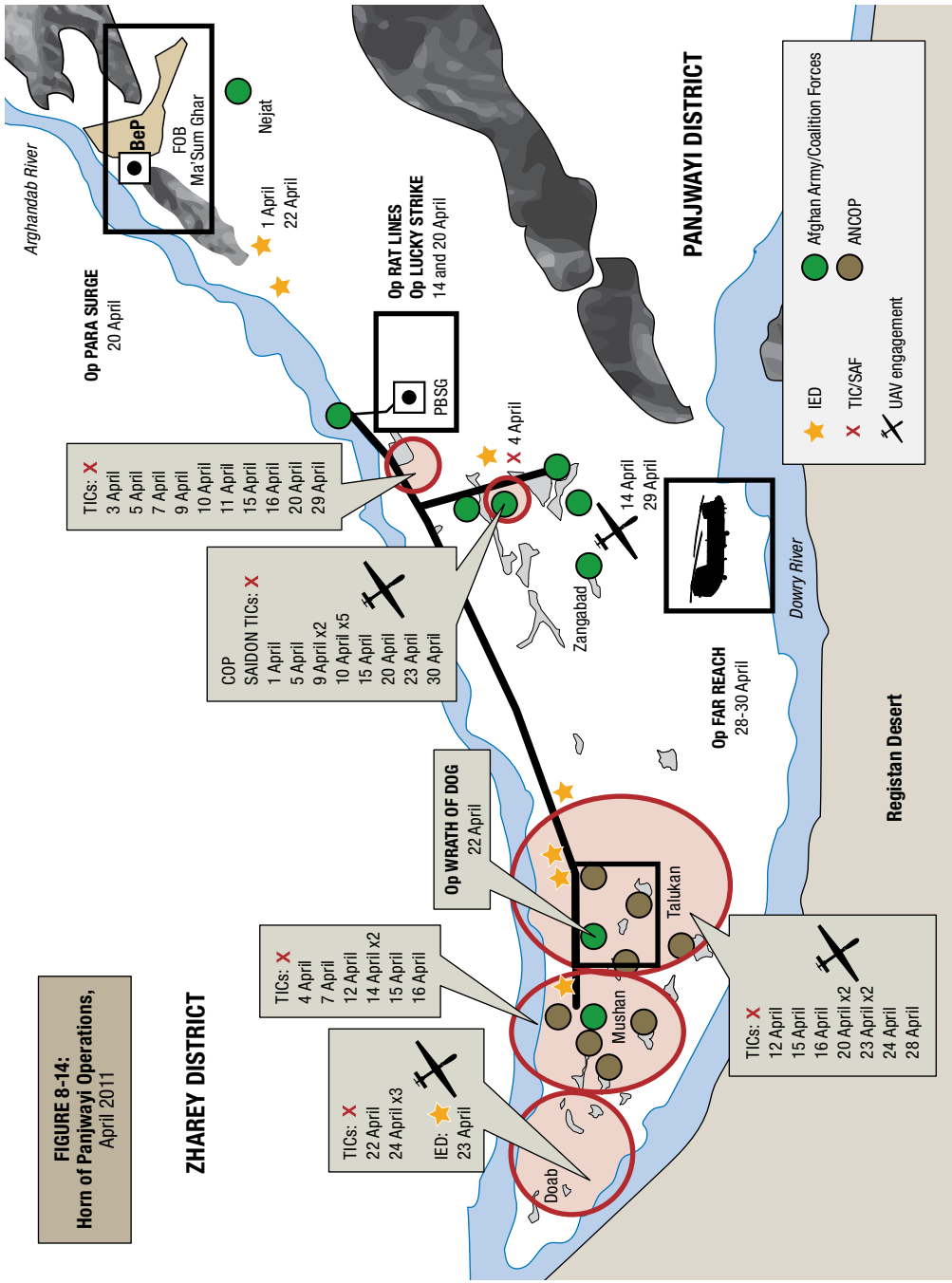

Figure 8-14: Horn of Panjwayi Operations, April 2011

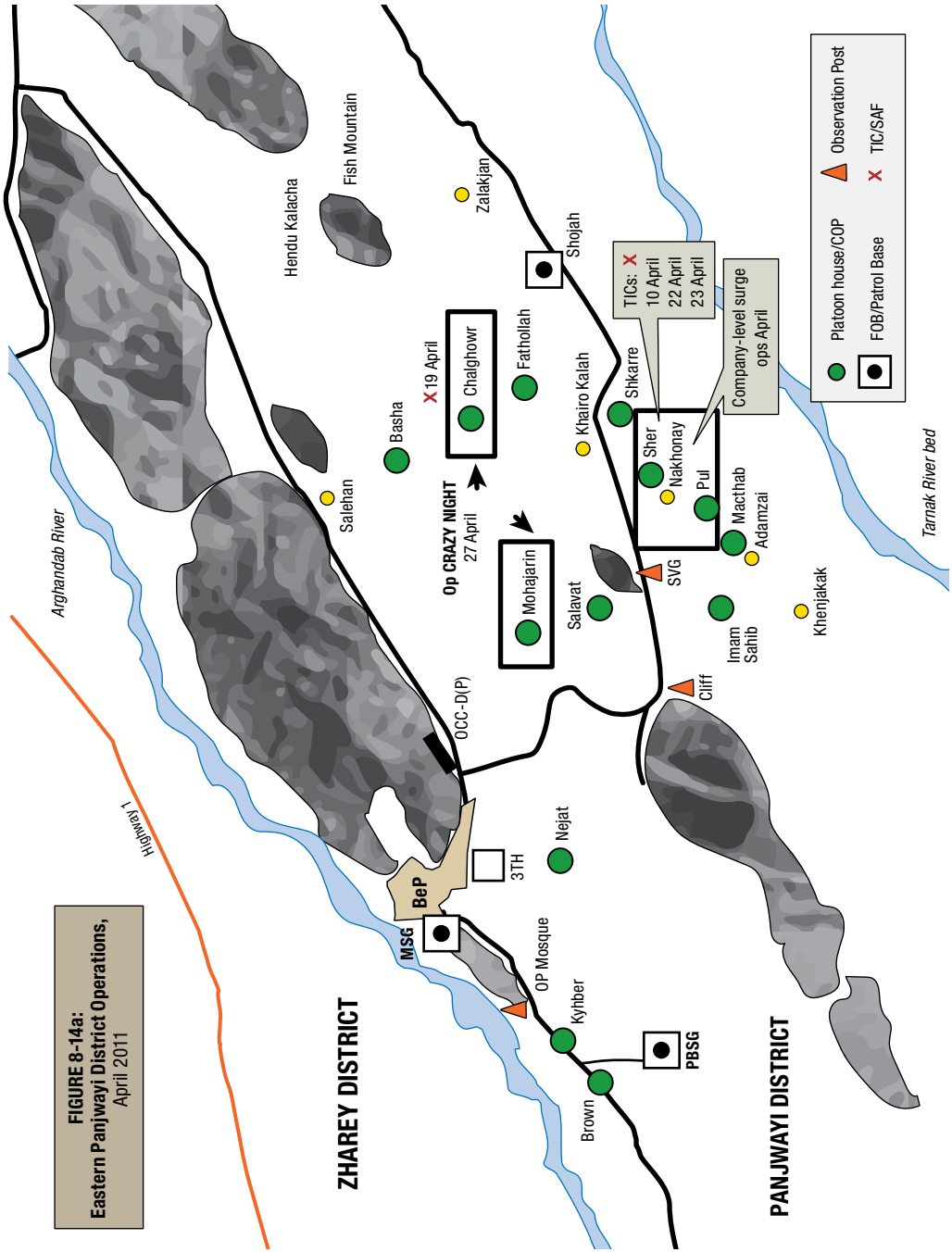

Figure 8-14a: Eastern Panjwayi District Operations, April 2011

Attempts to open Salavat School in April initially fizzled. On opening day, no children arrived "despite a majority of the community expressing an interest….difficulties in obtaining the community assurance of security as well as a nominated teacher from the divided elders."[204] People in Salavat who wanted to work at the school received threatening phone calls from Pakistan. Children who were on their way to the opening were waylaid by an insurgent group, had their backpacks confiscated, were threatened with mutilation, and told to go home. Canadian observers learned that there was an edict from Mullah Omar, of all people, to the Salavat population. This ultimate 'night letter' demanded that no-one from Salavat would work for ISAF or the government, and no child shall attend a non-Islamic school. Further analysis uncovered the fact that two of the Salavat elders had personal connections to Mullah Omar and had something to do with this edict being issued.[205]

The Afghan authorities in the district rushed to Salavat. Haji Fazluddin Agha, Chief Azim Khan and Brigadier General Habibi told the Salavat parents that they would send troops and police in and forcibly take the children to school, if necessary. C Company hit the streets along with a company from 6th Kandak. Within 24 hours, 32 children were attending the Salavat School. By the end of April it was handling 350 students without incident.[206]

As it turned out, Mullah Omar 'blinked' the day the school opened, and realizing that this would be an information operations fiasco for the Taliban, removed school attendance from his edict.[207] The fact that all that the Taliban could do in eastern Panjwayi district was rough up some school children was not exactly the image the Quetta Shura wanted to project and was yet another nail in the coffin for their plan to humiliate the Canadian Army.

Enemy infiltration into Regay and Skecha remained limited, as was their ability to have any significant effect in the Haji Habbibolla-Nejat area. B Company's redeployment and the increased measures around the Sperwan communities likely had some impact on the insurgents. One enemy team was able to get a radio-controlled IED onto the road near Ma'Sum Ghar, however, and attack a convoy from Para Company, but the weapon was not aligned properly to do the job, which indicated that the emplacers were inexperienced. Towards the end of the month Combat Outpost Nejat was shot at, again to little effect. Para Company and its Afghan partners mounted several surge operations into Bazaar-e Panjwayi in support of police cordon and search operations. Operation SHOPPING PEGASUS was assessed to have suppressed most insurgent activity in that vital economic and political centre. For the most part the Nejat area became an enemy forward operating zone but their activity was limited to destroying the abandoned school at Dastageri and intimidation activities against the small communities south of Nejat. Aggressive and constant patrolling by Cpt Jean-Francoise Legault and 2 Platoon coupled with CIMIC activities kept the opposition at bay until the school could be rebuilt. Nejat and its associated facility at

UFO Hill, backed up with the occupants of Three Tank Hill were enough to keep the insurgents' activities limited and away from Bazaar-e Panjwayi, but without permanent police presence it remained a coalition disrupt operation in this area.[208]

The vast majority of activity in April was in the Horn of Panjwayi. C Squadron Combat Team by this time was operating from the Mushan base, Combat Outpost Bennedson, where a Special Forces ODA and the Afghan Civil Order Police were situated. ANCOP worked the town itself, with support from a Canadian CIMIC team led by Capt Ali Raju. The ODA ranged between Mushan and Do Ab, disrupted enemy movements, raided homemade explosive caches, and targeted leadership. Maj Landry and his armour supported these operations as required, especially when the American SOF needed extraction after IED strikes or when the ANCOP checkpoint west of Mushan came under fire. Many 120mm rounds were expended during these operations against an enemy force that was assessed as consisting of local Taliban and a Pakistani insurgent component.[209]

The Route Hyena road project had not quite yet reached Mushan. Gravel trucks escorted by MAXXpro armoured vehicles with mine rollers constantly moved back and forth along the route, while Canadian and American heavy equipment worked the front end. Afghan paving crews followed up, protected by private security companies. Afghan police and army patrols ranged along the whole highway, and CIMIC teams working with Engineer Construction Teams dealt with local water flow issues as they emerged. The information operations message that moved west like a juggernaut was that "Change is coming. You can't stop it. Be part of it." The enemy responded by manipulating a prominent American journalist who wrote an article that a local man lay down in front of a bulldozer to stop road construction, thus implying local resistance to the project. TF Kandahar investigated and the story was untrue.[210]

Dog Company, which finally came under control of the battle group around this time, expanded its operating base in Talukan, which at this point had a bustling bazaar that was more prosperous than Mushan's. Dog Company's neighbors included an ODA and Afghan police, who were attempting to implement the local police initiative in the surrounding communities. Dog Company ranged south pushing patrols towards the Reg Desert.[211]

A Company, its Afghan partners from 2nd Kandak, special operations forces, and a plethora of engineers from 22 Naval Construction Regiment and all three countries now occupied Combat Outpost Suleiman, formerly COP Zangabad. From here patrols and CIMIC teams roamed the surrounding communities of Dimari, Gandari, and Lakani. There were coalition forces in all of these communities: a platoon at COP Palace, an Afghan company in COP Sidon, and a platoon in COP Belamby. Route Quebec, which was now paved, connected the area with Route Hyena. IED activity on the routes dropped off

completely. Priority projects in the area included mosque refurbishment, clinic construction, and now playgrounds and soccer fields. The original school house, misused by the Taliban as a court, was completely refurbished as a school. This was a deliberate information operations message. Occupation of the Zangabad area was exceptionally disruptive to the enemy given its geographical importance as a staging area for the rest of their operations in the district and points east.[212]

B Company, Recce Squadron and batterie X operated out of Sperwan Ghar. B Company and its Afghan partners from 2nd Kandak pushed into Pay-e Moluk, Sperwan, and Na'al Bazaar. Recce Squadron shifted to route security along Hyena, while patrols were now handled by Afghan security forces. The declining capabilities of the Coyotes meant that new organization was required: each observation post consisted of a Coyote with a mast; a LAV III RWS, and a LAV III LORIT. Every time a recce observation post was set up in any given area, enemy activity dropped off. The combination of aerostats at Sperwan Ghar and Zangabad, Coyotes and LAV RWS vehicles, and orbiting UAV's produced a web of observation that cued artillery and fast air as required. Route clearance by the EROC engineering vehicles continued several times a day.[213]

When the Panjwayi insurgent commanders complained to the Taliban leadership that they lacked the resources to resist the coalition in the Horn, they were told in no uncertain terms to go back and get on with it.[214] Consequently, they spent the month of April rebuilding their forces in the Horn. Pleas for help from confrères in Zharey District yielded only limited assistance; those insurgent groups were fighting the Stryker Brigade, and had little to spare.

In a general sense, the insurgency in the Horn consisted of a group or groups assigned to harass each community: Mushan, Talukan, Zangabad, and the Sperwan Ghar area. Intimidation operations, however, dramatically decreased. The murder of Haji Aya Mohammed, the Talukan Mirab, resulted in a delegation of local elders travelling to Pakistan to confront Taliban leaders there, who pledged to discipline the personnel who conducted the killing. Justice came in the form of a Hellfire missile instead once the killers were identified by coalition forces.[215]

It was during this time the loss of so many small caches and the destruction of homemade explosive production facilities in the spring had a dramatic effect on the Horn insurgency. They could not equip all of the personnel they had, especially the incoming out-of-area fighters. They could not mount the same level of IED activity that they had over the past year. Indeed, there were two small clusters of IED attacks, one west of Mushan designed to deter SOF operations, and another on Route Hyena near Talukan. Their top IED team from the Zarqawi group was also taken out at some point which further reduced their capabilities.[216]

The only activity that the insurgents could really undertake at this time was to mount direct fire attacks on coalition patrols and infrastructure. In an attempt to send a message that they were not confined to the Do Ab area, there was a concerted insurgent harassment effort directed against OP Khyber in the first half of April. In six engagements between 1 and 10 April, there were only two Afghan civilians wounded. The Canadian platoon and Afghan platoon continued their aggressive patrolling of the area and maintained freedom of movement. OP Kyber and Route Hyena remained open for business in that sector.[217]

B Company and 2nd Kandak also maintained a heavy patrolling posture and pushed into Pay-e Moluk and Na'al Bazaar on two company-level operations on 14 and 20 April. The only enemy activity was a TIC on 20 April when a pair of insurgents, possible spotters, engaged a Canadian patrol to no effect.[218]

In the Zangabad area, A Company patrols to the south of COP Suleiman on four occasions ran into what was assessed to be an enemy early warning system. The local population in that area told the contractor fixing the mosque that the area was increasingly hostile and not to come back. A Company and an Afghan company from 2nd Kandak mounted up in Chinooks and launched Operation FAR REACH into the area on 28 April. There was no significant contact with enemy forces but further analysis suggested that there was homemade explosive production taking place and that the four contacts were small forces protecting it. More ISTAR resources were applied to define the issue further.[219]

Over in COP Palace, the Canadian and Afghan platoons were confronted with a series of five attacks against gravel trucking on Route Hyena. Working with the recce troops, enough presence was established to ensure the route remained open. An Afghan soldier triggered an IED on one occasion, but that was the extent of enemy activity.[220] It was not exactly clear who exactly was shooting up the truckers and there was a belief that commercial violence played a role. The trucks came from the Dastageri construction company and the gravel pit was owned by the Sherzais. It was possible that there was some form of Noorzai or even Popalzai pushback against Alikozai and Barakzai interests that was being played out and superimposed on the insurgency in the Horn.[221]

The real hot spot in the Zangabad area was Combat Outpost Saidon, situated between Talukan and Zangabad. Six pipeline contractors were attacked on the adjacent Route Quebec with an IED on 4 April: to his credit and as a vote of confidence in security, the lead contractor told A Company that he was committed to completing the project. For the rest of the month there was small arms fire sporadically directed at the outpost and its patrols every other day. On each of the fifteen occasions, the Afghan and Canadian patrols fired back, the enemy fled, and freedom of movement reasserted. Orbiting UAVs were usually unable to gain positive identification in time and could not bring other fires

to bear. The exception was an engagement with a suspected sniper on 21 April who shot at a Canadian patrol. Batterie X fired 81mm smoke to screen the patrol, which sustained a casualty from traversing the terrain. An MQ-9 reaper that was on station engaged and killed the insurgent with a Hellfire missile. The attacks were very likely conducted by small teams or even individuals.[222]

Dog Company in Talukan was confronted with an enemy IED cell operating along Route Hyena and, on one occasion, it worked with an ambush team targeting gravel trucking. The situation amped up on 12 April, however, when a suicide bomber blew himself up in Talukan bazaar, wounding two Canadian and five American personnel conducting CIMIC and PSYOPs activities, as well as two children. This attack did not endear the insurgents with the local population, especially now that the bazaar was flourishing economically. Afghan army patrols in Talukan were engaged with 'shoot n' scoot' on a handful of occasions to no effect. Patrolling continued. Orbiting UAVs were, unfortunately, unable to gain positive identification so they could not engage. Again, it was assessed that it was small teams or individuals doing the shooting. Dog Company and 2nd Kandak launched Operation WRATH OF DOG on 22 April into the Talukan area to generate confidence among the local people.[223]

The situation in Mushan in April was somewhat different from the other sectors. The enemy saw this area as a front line of sorts and tried to portray the ending of Route Hyena in Mushan as a victory for them, claiming they stopped the coalition it its tracks. The reality was, of course, different and technically related to land clearance issues, and the paving back log. However, when the special forces and police attempted to get a local police initiative off the ground, the insurgency targeted the families of the six men who volunteered. The enemy operating areas included the so-called "Taliban bazaar" and Do Ab. These areas were laced with IEDs in an attempt to limit the freedom of movement by the leadership-hunting SOF organizations. The ANCOP had an outpost between Mushan and Do Ab/Taliban Bazaar and it attracted enemy small arms fire from time to time. C Squadron Combat Team rolled out a Leopard troop on occasion to support the outpost with 120mm fire. The miniscule number of IED attacks that did take place were made by devices that "were poorly constructed and low-ordered." UAVs orbiting the area saw suspected enemy personnel on several occasions but were generally unable to gain positive identification in time to launch weapons. When they did, they killed several IED emplacement teams.[224]

By the end of April, there appeared to be a lot of enemy activity in the Horn but it proved to be of a transitory nature. The coalition forces had enough troops on the ground so they were not pinned into their tactical infrastructure, as 2 PPCLI Battle Group had been in 2008, or 1 RCR Battle Group had in 2010. The enemy had most of

its equipment and capabilities taken away earlier because of the lower-level engagement with the communities. CIMIC and construction activities continued, and local manpower was employed. Commerce followed the road and the Panjwayi district government made tentative steps to connect with an extremely wary population. Indeed, the senior and most respected mullah in Talukan emerged to support the coalition efforts in the area: he held influence in Mushan as well as Talukan.[225]

Overshadowing Events, April–May 2011

Coalition accomplishments in Panjwayi district were overshadowed by three events in April. The first was extensive media attention directed at an American religious figure who threatened to burn Korans in Florida. The result was a series of riots across the province protesting this behavior. In Panjwayi rioting broke out in Bazaar-e Panjwayi. This was contained and dealt with by Azim Khan's police with no coalition involvement. Whether this was a special case or whether it highlighted a new independence by the Panjwayi police was open to discussion. In any event, there were no apparent repercussions in the operating areas and there was no real effect on operations.[226]

The second event was what some dubbed "Sarposa II: The Great Escape." On 25 April, over 400 insurgents from the national security wing of the prison escaped through a tunnel that led to a nearby building. They were assisted by relatives who had been previously contacted and told to drive to the prison for the pickup. It was clear that the prison staff facilitated the escape. Around 60 escapees were apprehended, but that left 300 or so on the loose. The Taliban leadership had been fretting about reduced numbers of experienced personnel, just as they had in 2008, and a Sarposa breakout was seen to be the solution. In addition to the breakout causing damage to the reputations of the other government departments at Camp Nathan Smith, there was concern that some of the escapees would head to Nakhonay as they did in 2008 and that that area would be reinflamed. For whatever reason, history did not repeat itself.[227]

The third was the assassination on 15 April of the Provincial Chief of Police, LGen Khan Mohammad Mujahid, by a suicide bomber dressed as a police captain. That action deprived Kandahar of a strong, competent leader at a bad time, and upset the balance of tribal power in the province. Khan Mohammad had been the last of the Alikozai power-brokers from Arghandab District who were associated with Mullah Naqib, and his death left the Alikozais in complete disarray with significant long-term implications for peace in Kandahar Province. Of course, the insurgency was not the only faction that would benefit from Khan Mohammad's demise.[228]

Photo Credit: Author

Photo Credit: Author

In the final days of Canadian operations in the Horn of Panjwayi, the tank squadron was forced to extricate an American special forces team that encountered multiple IEDs during a raid near Do Ab west of Mushan. A Leopard tank 'rolls the road' while a TLAV crew observes the fighting.

Mitigation of the effects of the Sarposa break on Canada-US relations fell on the Canadian staff at Regional Command (South), in particular BGen Corbould:

> There were all sorts of balls dropped. A week after the handover [at the PRT] from the Canadian [civilian] lead to American civilian lead, we had the Sarposa prison break and people started pointing fingers at each other. It was absolutely pathetic. The American civilians were saying, "We didn't get the hand-over" and the Canadians were saying, "We did hand it over." Col Richard Giguère and I cleaned that up. The military stepped in to fix it again, in the end, because of the complete, utter inability of the American civilians to properly lead that PRT. Six months later, we put in an American military commander again … I think having a civilian in charge of a thing like a PRT is absolutely the wrong way to go in the future.[229]

Finally on 7 May the Taliban launched a major operation in Kandahar City. Small groups of fighters and suicide bombers attacked four major locations, including the Governor's Palace. In all four locations the enemy was decisively wiped out with almost no coalition casualties. Indeed, it was Afghan security forces, particularly the Canadian-mentored Provincial Response Company that handled the response to these attacks. The attack was a complete failure as none of the targets were penetrated by enemy forces.[230]

These events which took place in April and May were exhaustively reported on by media. When viewed collectively and out of context, they portrayed southern Afghanistan and Kandahar province as completely out of control. They were designed by the enemy to be spectacular events. The unspectacular reduction of enemy influence in Panjwayi province after several years of fighting received no international press coverage whatsoever.

Indeed, on 2 May 2011 coalition forces throughout Afghanistan learned that an American special operations mission assaulted a fortified compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, and killed Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. There was an immediate effect on all levels of the insurgency. The raison d'être for Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan in 2001-2002 was finally achieved, though the linkages between the current insurgency and the larger jihadist goals of Al Qaeda had by this point become seriously diluted. That said, however, the Taliban was shocked, especially the members of the Quetta Shura who assumed they were next, and went to ground. As for the impact in the Canadian area of operations, it took the insurgency nearly two weeks to re-initiate operations in Panjwayi district. Canada's war was not quite yet over.

End-Game in Panjwayi District, May–June 2011

In the final weeks of Canadian operations in Panjwayi district, the headquarters staff from 3-21 Infantry led by LTC Stephen Miller deployed in preparation for the relief in place scheduled for early June. Apache Company from 3-21 Infantry also arrived to relieve Dog Company. During that time every effort was made by LCol Mike St-Louis and the battle group to acclimatize the 'Gimlets' to Panjwayi district.

Overall, C Company and 6th Kandak achieved steady state in eastern Panjwayi in May, with a pair of minor events in their area of operations and a sweep into Chalghowr. They progressively handed over to incoming American and Afghan units from late May to early June. Para Company had a pair of contacts but after mounting Operation PEGASUS RETURN and PEGASUS CLEAN south of Nejat, enemy activity dropped off. Bazaar-e Panjwayi remained quiet until the relief was in place (see Figure 8-15 and Figure 8-15a).[231]

B Company and 2nd Kandak launched several company-level sweeps in Na'al Bazaar, Pay-e Moluk, and Sperwan and the area remained quiet until mid-May when a devastatingly large IED attack killed eleven contractors and wounded another 20 on Route Brown. OP Kyber was shot up on three occasions, to no effect. A cluster of TICs in the final days took place southeast of Sperwan Ghar, followed by an aerial engagement with a UAV against a fleeting insurgent target. That said, construction continued, Brown and Hyena remained open, and CIMIC maintained its operations in the B Company area.[232]

The Zangabad area was a magnet for enemy activity in May. After Operation PUSH BACK was mounted on 12 May, the combat outpost and various Canadian and Afghan patrols were engaged on eight occasions towards the end of the month. Again, most of them amounted to 'shoot n' scoot' but it was evident that the insurgents to the south wanted to keep their hand in. COP Palace was shot up a few times, but patrolling continued. C Squadron Combat Team rolled up Route Hyena to the Zangabad Ghar area for Operation WE'RE BACK on 7 May, with little contact. Route Hyena itself remained open with all of the IED activity located in and around Mushan. COP Saidon suffered a drive-by shooting but other than that it was quiet compared to April.[233]

A planned air assault into the communities south of Mushan and Talukan had to be cancelled. On 16 May a Canadian Chinook helicopter crashed while inserting forces during a preliminary operation. The site was secured by C Squadron Combat Team and the five Canadian wounded were evacuated. Mi-26 Halo heavy lift helicopters stationed at Kandahar Air Field were hired to extract the wreckage.[234] The Canadian, American, and Afghan forces in Mushan kept up steady pressure on the Do Ab insurgency with a combination of sweep operations, SOF raids, and police capacity building in Mushan until the relief in place could occur.

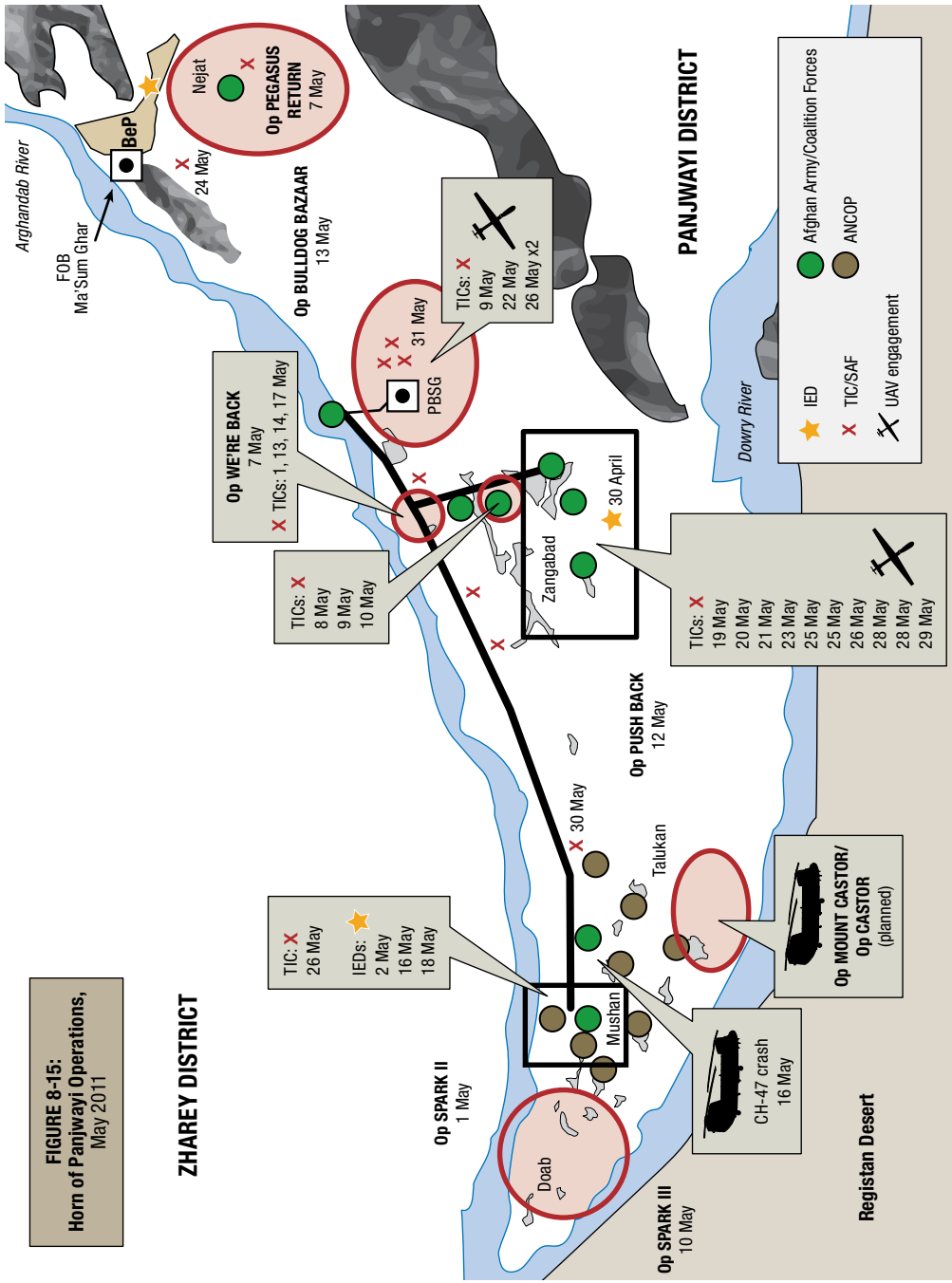

FIGURE 8-15:
Horn of Panjwayi Operations,
May 2011

Figure 8-15: Horn of Panjwayi Operations, May 2011

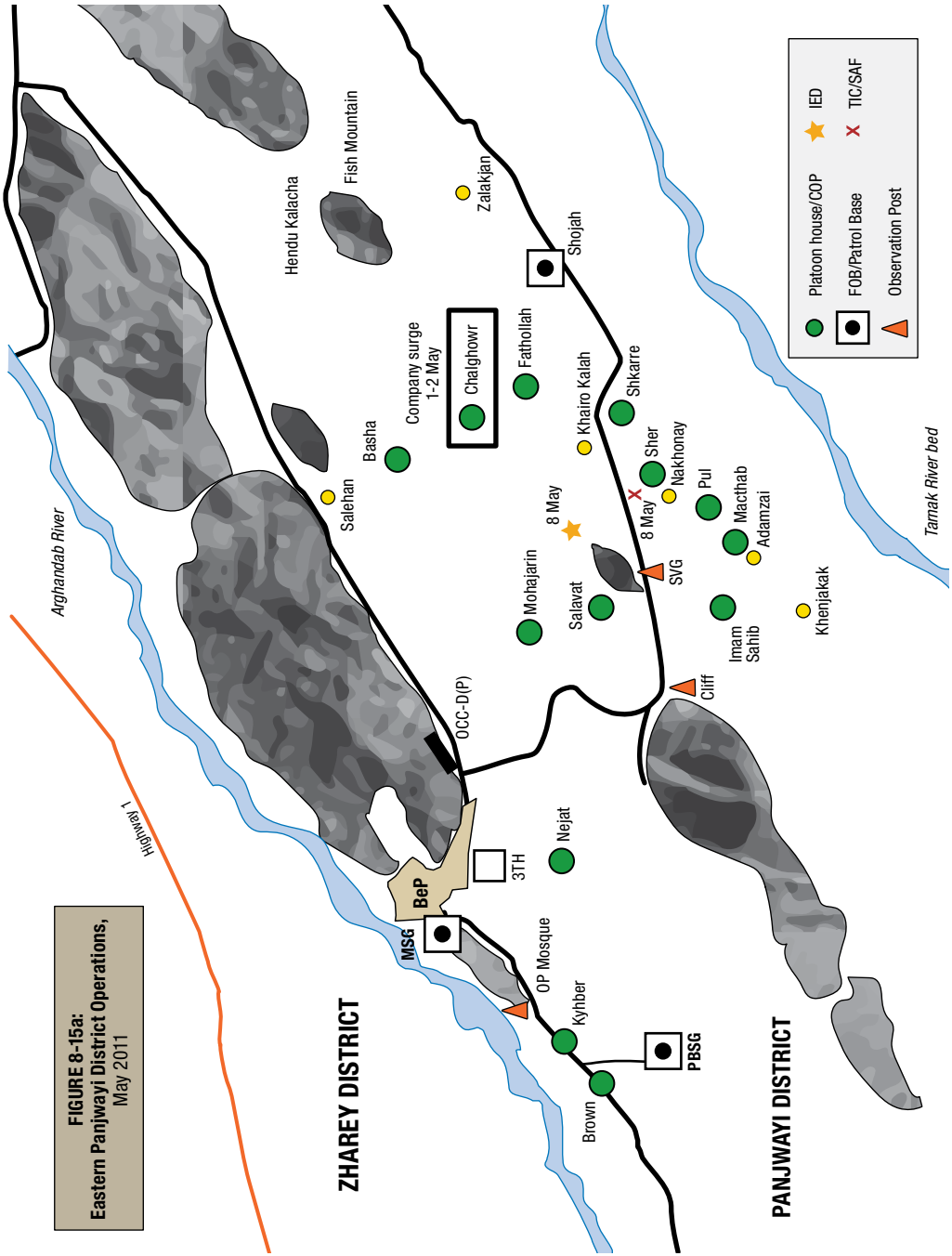

Figure 8-15a: Eastern Panjwayi District Operations, May 2011

By that point Route Hyena was completely paved from Bazaar-e Panjwayi to Mushan. On 27 May, all of the provincial and ISAF dignitaries flew in for a ribbon-cutting ceremony. The long road to Mushan, started in 2008, was now complete.[235] Three weeks ahead of schedule, BGen Habibi told BGen Milner, "I'll take over now."[236]

Overall, the situation in Panjwayi in May was of a lesser intensity than April. There were fewer IEDs, and fewer small arms attacks. Enemy activity was down in Mushan, Talukan, Sperwan Ghar, and even OP Kyber. The only place it significantly increased was south of Zangabad as the enemy, with his back to the Reg Desert, desperately scrabbled to keep a hold of his east-west rat line. There were no substantial acts of intimidation reported in any of the patrolled communities. And road construction was not interdicted at any point. Bdr Karl Manning of batterie X, unfortunately, died of a non-battle related incident on 27 May.[237]

ISTAR reportage portrayed a completely demoralized enemy in Panjwayi district. Insurgents complained that they could not fight face-to-face and could only use IEDs. Operations were exceptionally difficult because of all of the patrolling. The Zarqawi group IED experts were all dead: it was evident that the insurgents were suffering from skill fade. Night raids hurt the morale of the commanders. There were supply issues. In effect the enemy was completely discombobulated.[238]

The insurgency's intent to humiliate Canada and her army completely failed in the spring and summer of 2011. The Canadian Army's end game in Panjwayi district was orderly and professional. The transition to 3-21 Infantry went smoothly as 1 R22eR Battle Group sub-units handed over to their American counterparts in late May and early June. A new District Support Team came in, and USAID arrived with a host of new aid packages. All new forces arrived on paved roads protected by Afghan security forces. Panjwayi district was lush from the improved and cleared irrigation systems. The Canadian Army left Panjwayi district and its inhabitants a better place than when they arrived. It had never been greener since the dangerous days of 2006.

ENDNOTES

1. Interview with LCol Marcel McNicholl (KAF, 14 April 2011).
2. Interview with LCol Roger Cotton (KAF, 14 April 2011). Note that a survey of DSRs and WSRs from this period shows that they are much clearer on development benchmarks for the Afghan national security forces than DSRs and WSRs from previous rotations.
3. Cotton interview.
4. CIMIC briefing to the author (KAF, 28 April 2011).
5. Author's discussions with TF Kandahar HQ personnel (April-May 2011).
6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. TF Kandahar Engineer Regiment briefing to the author (KAF, 13 May 2011).
11. CIMIC briefing to the author (KAF, 28 April 2011).
12. TF Kandahar Engineer Regiment briefing to the author (KAF, 13 May 2011).
13. By the fall of 2010, a substantial clean-up of terminology was needed as "non-operation HAMKARI" and "Operation MOSHTARAK" were used interchangeably by the various staffs. Finally, "Operation MOSHTARAK Phase III Stage 3A" became Operation GAD PASOON, and "non-operation HAMKARI 3.3B" evolved into Operation BAAWAR and Operation PASS RAFTAN. See JTF-A HQ WSR (24-30 August 2010) and JTF-A HQ WSR (14–20 September 2010).
14. Interview with BGen André Corbould (Edmonton, 11 July 2012).
15. Interview with LCol Mike St-Louis (Winnipeg, 31 January 2012).
16. Interview with BGen Dean Milner (Ottawa, 20 November 2012).
17. TFK INTSUM (3 September 2010).
18. Interview with LCol Conrad Mialkowski (Ottawa, 25 October 2012).
19. *Ibid.*
20. JTF-A HQ DSR (1 September 2010).
21. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (September 2010).
22. JTF-A HQ DSR (16 September 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (30 September 2010).
23. Mialkowski interview.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*
26. Telephone interview with Maj Eleanor Taylor (24 February 2013).
27. JTF-A HQ DSR (15 September 2010); Mialkowski interview.
28. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (September 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (14–21 September 2010).
29. TFK INTSUM (9 September 2010); TFK INTSUM (12 September 2010).
30. JTF-A HQ DSR (10 September 2010).
31. JTF-A HQ DSR (15 September 2010); TFK INTSUM (16 September 2010).
32. TFK INTSUM (17 September 2010).
33. TFK INTSUM (19 September 2010); TFK INTSUM (30 September 2010).
34. OMLT briefing to the author (KAF, 30 April 2011).
35. Interview with Colonel Ian Creighton (Ottawa, 21 November 2012).
36. *Ibid.*

37. OMLT briefing to the author (KAF, 30 April 2011). The briefing staff blamed BGen Ménard for exhausting 2nd Kandak and took a dim view of the enforced ISAF partnering directives from 2009–2010, which they also implicated in the 2nd Kandak problem.
38. Creighton interview.
39. JTF-A HQ WSR (24–30 August 2010); JTF-A HQ WSR (31 August–6 September 2010).
40. JTF-A HQ DSR (21 September 2010).
41. Creighton interview.
42. Milner interview; Telephone interview with LCol Doug Claggett (19 February 2013).
43. OMLT briefing to the author (KAF, 30 April 2011).
44. OMLT briefing to the author, (KAF, 30 April 2011).
45. Claggett interview.
46. TFK INTSUM (2 September 2010).
47. TFK INTSUM (10 September 2010).
48. TFK INTSUM (14 September 2010); TFK INTSUM (17 September 2010).
49. TFK INTSUM (20 September 2010).
50. TFK INTSUM (18 September 2010).
51. Derived from JTF-A HQ DSRs (September–November 2010). See also JTF-A WSRs for the same period.
52. JTF-A HQ WSR (24–30 August 2010).
53. *Ibid.*
54. JTF-A HQ DSR (17 September 2010); Creighton interview; MP Company briefing to the author (KAF, 15 July 2010).
55. JTF-A HQ DSR (22 September 2010).
56. JTF-A HQ DSR (28 September 2010).
57. JTF-A HQ DSR (24 September 2010); TFK INTSUM (24 September 2010); TFK INTSUM (30 September 2010).
58. Distilled from JTF-A HQ WSRs (September to November 2010).
59. Mialkowski interview; Milner interview.
60. TF Kandahar briefings to the author (KAF, 13–15 April 2011); discussion with TF Kandahar staff (30 April 2011); Claggett interview; Mialkowski interview; Milner interview.
61. Apparently, PASS RAFTAN also means “the retreat”, and TF Kandahar inadvertently used it in both contexts.
62. Claggett interview; JTF-A HQ, “Operation BAAWAR (Assurance)” (20 November 2010); TF Kandahar briefings to the author (KAF, 13–15 April 2011).
63. Claggett interview; TF Engineer Regiment briefing to the author (KAF, 13 May 2011); ECS briefing to the author (KAF, 26 April 2011).
64. Distilled from daily TFK SITREPS for (October 2010); Milner interview.
65. *Ibid.;* Claggett interview.
66. Claggett interview.

67. *Ibid.* Milner interview; JTF-A HQ WSR (28 September–4 October 2010).
68. JTF-A HQ WSR (28 September–4 October 2010).
69. Milner interview.
70. *Ibid.*; JTF-A HQ WSR (12–18 October 2010); Mialkowski interview.
71. JTF-A HQ WSR (19–25 October 2010); Milner interview.
72. Distilled from JTF-A WSRs (October–November 2010).
73. Distilled from daily TFK SITREPS (November 2010).
74. JTF-A HQ POSM (8 December 2010).
75. Snipers and sharpshooters have different levels of training and equipment. The requirement for longer-ranged fire in eastern Panjwayi due to the terrain influenced the decision to designate sharpshooters in each company and provide them with older sniper rifles. The sniper platoon operated as a battle group resource.
76. 1 R22eR Battle Group briefing to the author (KAF, 12 April 2011).
77. Corbould interview.
78. Regional Command (South), briefing to the author, (KAF, 26 April 2011 and 11 May 2011). See also Corbould interview.
79. Regional Command (South) briefing to the author (KAF, 26 April 2011 and 11 May 2011). See also Corbould interview.
80. Corbould interview.
81. *Ibid.*
82. *Ibid.*
83. Briefing, "National Support Element Task Force 3-10 Logistical Challenges (6 December 2012).
84. Interview with Col Sébastien Bouchard (12 April 2013).
85. *Ibid.*
86. *Ibid.*
87. NSE briefing to the author (KAF, 5 May 2011).
88. TFK HQ & Sigs Squadron briefing to the author (KAF, 26 April 2011).
89. *Ibid.*
90. Detainee Transfer Facility briefing to the author, (KAF, 11 May 2011).
91. *Ibid.*
92. Health Services Unit briefing to the author (KAF, 12 May 2011).
93. Milner and Claggett interviews.
94. St-Louis interview.
95. JTF-A HQ WSR (16-22 November 2010); TFK Commander's Update Brief (16 November 2010); Interview with Maj Christian Caron (KAF, 18 April 2011).
96. Interview with Maj Éric Landry (Mushan: Panjwayi District, 22 April, 2011).
97. Interview with Maj Éric Landry (Mushan: Panjwayi District, 22 April, 2011).
98. JTF-A HQ DSR (3 December 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (4 December 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (5 December 2010).

99. JTF-A HQ DSRs (5–7 December 2010).
100. TFK INTSUM (4 December 2010); TFK INTSUM (5 December 2010).
101. TFK INTSUM (9 December 2010).
102. JTF-A HQ DSR (5 December 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (8 December 2010).
103. TFK Commander's Update Brief (10 December 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (9 December 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (10 December 2010).
104. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 December 2010).
105. St-Louis interview.
106. JTF-A HQ DSR (11 December 2010).
107. JTF-A HQ DSR (12 December 2010).
108. Landry interview.
109. Caron interview.
110. CIMIC briefing to the author (KAF, 28 April 2011).
111. JTF-A HQ DSR (19 December 2010).
112. *Ibid.*
113. Landry interview.
114. JTF-A HQ DSRs (20–21 December 2010).
115. JTF-A HQ DSR (28 December 2010).
116. JTF-A HQ DSR (27 December 2010).
117. JTF-A HQ DSRs (30–31 December 2010).
118. JTF-A HQ DSR (30 December 2010); JTF-A HQ DSR (31 December 2010).
119. JTF-A HQ DSR (31 December 2010).
120. TFK INTSUM (28 December 2010).
121. TFK INTSUM (31 December 2010).
122. JTF-A HQ WSR (3 November–6 December 2010).
123. *Ibid.*
124. JTF-A HQ WSR (14–20 December 2010).
125. Milner interview.
126. JTF-A HQ WSR (29 January–4 February 2011).
127. Author's experience driving through Dand district (April 2011).
128. TFK INTSUM (17 December 2010).
129. TFK INTSUM (15 January 2011).
130. Milner interview.
131. *Ibid.* JTF-A HQ WSRs (November–December 2010).

132. Interview with Maj Barbara Honig (KAF, 16 April 2011).
133. CIMIC briefing to the author (KAF, 28 April 2011).
134. "OCC-D(P)/District Support Team Operational Brief" (21 April 2011).
135. St-Louis interview.
136. *Ibid.*
137. *Ibid.*; Honig interview.
138. Author's observations in the Nejat area (April–May 2011); briefings to the author at new district centre by the OCC-D(P) and DST staff (21–22 April 2011).
139. St-Louis interview.
140. Discussions with LCol Mike St-Louis (FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, 4 April 2011).
141. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (January 2011).
142. *Ibid.*
143. *Ibid.*
144. *Ibid.*
145. JTF-A HQ WSR (1–7 January 2011).
146. JTF-A HQ WSR (8–14 January 2011).
147. JTF-A HQ WSR (15-21 January 2011).
148. JTF-A HQ WSR (15-21 January 2011).
149. Donald C. Bolduc, "Forecasting the Future of Afghanistan," *Special Warfare* (October–December 2011) http://www.soc.mil/SWCS/SWmag/archive/SW2404/SW2404ForecastingTheFutureOfAfghanistan.html
150. Mossop interview. Notes from TF Kandahar COS coordination meeting (12 July 2010).
151. Interview with CSOR personnel (Harrowsmith, 5 April 2013).
152. Col Donald C. Bolduc, "Forecasting the Future in Afghanistan," *Special Warfare* (October–December 2011).
153. CSOR interview.
154. Bolduc, "Forecasting the Future in Afghanistan."
155. Milner interview.
156. See Robin Moore, *The Green Berets* (New York: Avon Books, 1965); Shelby L. Stanton, *Green Berets at War: U.S. Army Special Forces in Southeast Asia 1956–1975* (Novato: Presidio Books, 1985); Charles M. Simpson III, *Inside the Green Berets: The Story of the U.S. Army Special Forces* (New York: Berkley Books, 1984); Alastair Horn, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954–1962* (New York: Viking Press, 1974).
157. CSOR interview.
158. *Ibid.*
159. This was not a new discovery. While the author accompanied TF Orion in the summer of 2006, a proxy system was noted in the remote northern districts of Kandahar Province. Likewise, in 2007, Recce Squadron (Maj Peter Huet) discovered a proxy system in Spin Boldak, and CIMIC teams operating in Zharey in 2008–2009 believed that almost all community leaders in that district were proxies but never managed to identify and locate the actual elders as CSOR did in Panjwayi.

160. CSOR interview.

161. *Ibid.*

162. *Ibid.* The author witnessed the transition in June 2011 and was similarly concerned about the low troop density and lack of enablers. Leaders of the incoming American battalion expressed the same concerns to the author.

163. Distilled from JTF-A DSRs (February 2011).

164. TFK INTSUM (6 February 2011).

165. Distilled from JTF-A DSRs (February 2011).

166. *Ibid.*

167. JTF-A HQ DSR (24 February 2010).

168. Interview with Maj François Sauvé (FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, 5 May 2011). The LCMDs were tried by previous rotations, but the lack of LCMDs in Canada for training, and the mobile nature of the operations conducted by those rotations, meant that the system did not come into its own until regular, small, foot patrols in specific geographic areas became the norm.

169. TFK INTSUM (6 February 2011); TFK INTSUM (7 February 2011).

170. JTF-A HQ WSR (5–11 February 2011).

171. JTF-A HQ WSR (22–28 January 2011).

172. TFK INTSUM (9 February 2011); TFK INTSUM (11 February 2011).

173. JTF-A HQ WSR (29 January–4 February 2011); JTF-A HQ WSR (5–11 February 2011).

174. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 February 2011).

175. JTF-A HQ DSR (6 February 2011). Honig interview.

176. Distilled from JTF-A DSRs (February 2011).

177. JTF-A HQ DSR (20 February 2011); JTF-A HQ WSR (29 January–4 February 2011).

178. TFK INTSUM (14 February 2011).

179. TFK INTSUM (17 February 2011).

180. JTF-A HQ DSR (25 February 2011).

181. Honig interview.

182. Distilled from JTF-A DSRs (March 2011).

183. Honig interview.

184. *Ibid.*

185. JTF-A HQ DSR (18 March 2011).

186. Honig interview; TFK INTSUM (27 March 2011).

187. Distilled from JTF-A DSRs (March 2011).

188. *Ibid.*

189. JTF-A HQ DSR (1 March 2011).

190. JTF-A HQ DSR (2 March 2011).

191. JTF-A HQ DSR (7 March 2011).
192. JTF-A HQ DSR (14 March 2011).
193. *Ibid.*
194. Distilled from JTF-A DSRs (March 2011).
195. *Ibid.*
196. *Ibid.*
197. TFK INTSUM (19 March 2011).
198. Distilled from JTF-A DSRs (March 2011). See also JTF-A HQ WSR (19–25 March 2011).
199. CIMIC briefing to the author (KAF, 28 April 2011).
200. TFK INTSUM (16 March 2011); TFK INTSUM (19 March 2011); TFK INTSUM (28 March 2011); TFK INTSUM (10 April 2011).
201. Distilled from JTF-A DSRs (April 2011).
202. TFK INTSUM (4 March 2011); TFK INTSUM (28 March 2011). Milner interview.
203. Milner interview.
204. JTF-A HQ WSR (9-15 April 2011).
205. TFK INTSUM (22 April 2011); TFK INTSUM (23 April 2011); TFK INTSUM (26 April 2011).
206. JTF-A HQ DSR (27 April 2011).
207. TFK INTSUM (14 April 2011).
208. Para Company briefing to the author (FOB Ma'Sum Ghar, 19 April 2011); Author's visit and patrol with Para Company (Nejat, 20–21 April 2011).
209. Author's observations (Mushan area, 22–25 April 2011).
210. Discussions with Maj Éric Landry (Mushan, 24 April 2011).
211. Author's observations (COP Robinson, 24 April 2011).
212. A Company briefing to the author (COP Suleiman, 3 May 2011).
213. A Squadron briefing to the author (FOB Sperwan Ghar, 3 May 2011).
214. TFK INTSUM (15 April 2011).
215. Derived from back-and-forth reportage and commentary in TFK INTSUMs (April–May 2011).
216. Distilled from TFK INTSUMs (April 2011).
217. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (April 2011).
218. *Ibid.*
219. *Ibid.*; Distilled from TFK INTSUMs (April 2011).
220. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (April 2011).
221. Discussions with OMLT staff.
222. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (April 2011).
223. *Ibid.*

224. *Ibid.*
225. JTF-A HQ WSR (2-8 April 2011).
226. *Ibid.*
227. Distilled from TFK INTSUMs (April and May 2011).
228. Author's discussions with OMLT staff (May 2011).
229. Corbould interview.
230. The author observed these events from the Regional Command (South) Operations Centre.
231. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (May 2011).
232. *Ibid.*
233. *Ibid.*
234. JTF-A HQ DSR (17 May 2011).
235. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (May 2011).
236. Milner interview.
237. Distilled from JTF-A HQ DSRs (May 2011).
238. TFK INTSUM (24 May 2011).

EPILOGUE

The unenviable and unglamorous task of closing out Operation ATHENA and managing the transition to Operation ATTENTION, the training mission in Kabul, fell to BGen Charles "Chuck" Lamarre and his Mission Transition Task Force (MTTF). Drawn from 375 units across Canada, the 1,600 personnel of the MTTF came from logistics, signals, electrical and mechanical engineering, and health services support units.[1] They were broken down into several functional mission closure units that dealt with ammunition, vehicles, packaging and airlift.

The accomplishments of the MTTF are perhaps best told in numbers, such as the 1,035 vehicles that the MTTF processed, selling civilian-type SUVs in Afghanistan, and returning all the military vehicles to Canada after cleaning them thoroughly to pass inspection by Agriculture Canada. Some of the numbers are staggeringly large; for example, the MTTF redistributed more than seven square kilometers of remediated soil, handed over 260 buildings, 60 tonnes of paper and 7,000 kilometers of signal cable to allies, and returned some 150 terabytes of data to Canada.

Anything that could be donated to the Afghan National Army was passed on through Brig Gen Habibi at 1-205 Brigade. Other materiel was donated to American units for use in influence operations. Special care had to be taken for the destruction of electrical components so they could not be reused in IEDs. All contracts of ten thousand dollars or less were shut down. Task Force Kandahar's compound was handed over to Commander KAF, and the Canadian accommodation areas went to the Americans.

By October 2011 the decision was made to use a combination of ground and air transport to avoid issues related to instability in Pakistan. Cryptological equipment, vehicles, ammunition, weapons, and high-value assets were sent back to Canada by air. It was fortunate that Canada had acquired the CC-117 Globemaster III transports and could therefore reduce dependency on contracted airlift. That said, 184 Antonov 225 sorties were used in addition to the 245 CC-117 loads.

During the close out, MTTF personnel came under fire on 87 occasions from rockets fired at Kandahar Air Field, resulting in two wounded. Canadian medical staff at the Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit continued to assist with allied wounded until November. By 12 December 2011 the last members of the MTTF departed Kandahar Air Field.

In 2011 the Canadian government decided to deploy Canadian Army personnel as part of the NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan (NTM-A). Operation ATTENTION was in many ways a combination of the ETT, OMLT, KMTC/ANTC and SAT-A functions and missions but with better synergy both from a national and a NATO perspective. Operation ATTENTION, which lasted from 2011 to 2014, will be covered in a later volume of this work.

For the Afghans, the war continued.

Abdul Latif Ashna, the Deputy Governor of Kandahar, was killed by a suicide bomber on 29 January 2011.

Ahmad Wali Karzai was assassinated by Sardar Mohammed, his chief of security, on 12 July 2011. Mohammed was gunned down immediately. On his way to the AWK funeral, Helmand governor Gulub Mangal narrowly avoided assassination. A suicide bomber targeted Karzai's funeral and killed the pro-coalition head of the Kandahar Ulema Shura, Hikmatulla Hikmat.

A suicide bomber killed Mayor Ghulam Haider Hamedi of Kandahar on 27 July 2011.

District Governor for Panjwayi District Haji Fazluddin Agha was assassinated by a suicide bomber on 16 January 2012, a year after he replaced Haji Baran. Baran was brought in to take over the district once again.

Former Kandahar Governor Assadullah Khalid was promoted to run the National Directorate of Security but was seriously wounded in an attack on his headquarters in Kabul on 6 December 2012 and never fully recovered from the experience. He was eventually appointed acting Minister of Defence.

After surviving several mass casualty-producing suicide bombings over the years, Abdul Rezziq was promoted General and played a significant role in maintaining order in the province. He was eventually assassinated in an insurgent-inspired insider attack at the Governor's Palace in Kandahar on 18 October 2018.

Though the motives underlying Canada's overseas involvement in Afghanistan were similar to those of our past wars in the 20th Century, there are marked differences in the end game in this conflict. The victorious coalitions were able to remake the world order after both world wars, and to defang and reform the societies that initiated those conflicts. The methodology employed back then involved defeating the enemy's armed forces, demoralizing the enemy population, and occupying their country. The Canadian Army was not an occupation force in Afghanistan and was in support of a government that asked for its assistance. The insurgency Canada encountered in Afghanistan was part of a global politico-religious phenomenon whose leaders wished the destruction of our society and culture, and intended to replace it with a totalitarian one based on a highly distorted version of Islam.

The initial manifestations of that phenomenon included Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and a number of regional allied groups based in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The destruction of their occupation regime in Afghanistan by coalition and Afghan forces, and its replacement with a legitimate and internationally recognized government, was assaulted by an insurgency that swore no national allegiance but was supported by entities in Pakistan and elsewhere for their strategic interests. Concurrent with this, Al Qaeda expanded into Iraq, Africa, Somalia, and other locations with varying degrees of success. Al Qaeda was, however, unable to achieve its strategic objectives. It never forced its so-called 'far enemy' to decisively surrender its positions in the Middle East or in Southwest Asia, and it was unable to generate more disruptive and lethal 9-11-style attacks. It arguably had little or nothing to do with the crucially important Arab Spring, though it attempted to exploit that zeitgeist to varying degrees.[2] That period ended in 2011 with the death of Osama bin Laden, something coincidental to the Canadian withdrawal from combat operations in southern Afghanistan and its assumption of the training role that eventually ended in early 2014. What happened in Afghanistan since the Canadian Army departed in 2014?

As this history goes to press, it is now twenty years after Canadian forces were first committed to Afghanistan and seven years since they departed. The Taliban and its allies, enabled by external interests, convinced the Ashraf Ghani-led government to flee and seized not only Kandahar City but Kabul as well. The Canadian Armed Forces was forced into a poorly coordinated, badly organized non-combatant evacuation operation as Taliban forces closed in on Kabul, leaving over 2000 Canadian-affiliated Afghans behind.

How did this happen? The insurgency entered a period of disarray between 2011 and 2014. The new Al Qaeda leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, was unable to stop centrifugal forces from fragmenting Al Qaeda, both outside the Afghanistan-Pakistan region and elsewhere.[3] As for the Taliban, Mullah Omar died of natural causes on 23 April 2013, generating similar problems within that movement.[4]

A reorganization of insurgent groups in Iraq in 2013, partly in response to repressive actions taken by the Syrian government in the wake of the Arab Spring and partly due to the collapsed command and control links to Al Qaeda leadership in Pakistan, produced what was initially called the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and later the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). After mounting a successful Blitzkrieg that seized large swathes of Iraqi territory, including the vital city of Mosul, the ISIS/ISIL organization extended a hand to Al Qaeda but was rebuffed by them in a public statement issued in February 2014.[5]

ISIS/ISIL's international success left Al Qaeda in the proverbial dust. Consequently some Al Qaeda elements in Pakistan affiliated themselves with ISIS/ISIL in 2014. Rogue elements from the Taliban and Terik-i-Taliban (TTP, the Pakistan Taliban), also joined them. This organization was called the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) but was also known as ISIS-K (Islamic State of Iraq-Syria Khorasan Province). It officially came into public existence in 2015.[6] Scrambling to compete, Al Qaeda announced the creation of Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and moved to embed as many of its fighters with Taliban units as possible in order to maintain influence. Clashes then occurred throughout the spring of 2015 between AQIS and ISKP/ISIS-K in Nangarhar Province in Afghanistan.[7]

Mullah Omar's death in 2013 had been kept a secret. In 2015 Ayman al-Zawahiri pledged *bayat* (fealty) to Mullah Omar as part of Al Qaeda's maneuverings against ISKP, not realizing he was dead. This led to significant loss of prestige when a great deal of ridicule was directed at Al Qaeda within the global jihadist community. Omar's death, when it was finally revealed in 2015, generated a 'civil war' for control of the Taliban organization in which hundreds of fighters killed each other. ISKP even capitalized on the disorder and beheaded Taliban personnel in the Afghanistan areas it operated in. The Taliban and its Al Qaeda allies retaliated in kind.[8] Al Qaeda continued to suffer dramatic losses. In July 2015, a large AQIS training facility was uncovered in Shorabak District in Kandahar Province by the Afghans and the coalition. After observing and analysing AQIS movements, the facility was hit on October with 63 airstrikes and a 200-man ground assault. Over 160 AQIS personnel were killed, with significant effects on both Al Qaeda and Taliban operations.[9]

And there was even more fragmentation within the insurgency. Splits within the Taliban produced yet another organization after the violence of 2015: The Islamic Emirate High Council in Afghanistan (IEHCA). The Taliban shadow governor of Nimroz Province, Mullah Mohammad Rasoul, organized Noorzai Pashtuns in Herat, Nimroz, and parts of Helmand. He did not get along with Mullah Omar's successor, Mullah Mansour, an Ishaquazi who was deeply involved in the narcotics trade and allied with the powerful Akhund clans in Helmand. This fight resulted in hundreds killed on both sides throughout 2016. Mansour was killed by a coalition airstrike, generating further discord and division within

Taliban ranks, particularly in Helmand Province where the IEHCA made gains at the expense of the Akhunds.[10] To what extent this was motivated by narcotics competition as opposed to ideology is open to question.

Reports emerged in 2016 that the Haqqani Tribal Network lost large numbers of personnel to ISKP after ISKP overran Al Qaeda in the Tora Bora mountains (the HTN later reached an accommodation with ISKP in 2020).[11] By 2017 the Taliban faced a three-front campaign: it was up against ISKP, the IEHCA, and the Afghan government and its supporting coalition.[12] A bewildered and possibly bemused coalition intelligence staff sat back and watched the insurgency eat itself. The assertion that "the Taliban" somehow battled the coalition to a stalemate on its own and that this produced calls for a ceasefire in 2018 is clearly challengeable. Perhaps the previous decade of coalition operations played some role in frustrating the insurgency in achieving its aims.

With the Taliban and Al Qaeda in disarray, the Afghan government and the coalition forces focused on ISKP in 2019. A successful campaign severely damaged ISKP in the N2P provinces in eastern Afghanistan, and in November 2019 President Ashraf Ghani declared victory over ISKP. In early 2020 the ISKP leader for Afghanistan, Abdullah Orakzai, was captured by Afghan security forces in Kandahar. A subsequent operation in Kabul netted the ISKP regional commander, Abu Omar Khorasani.[13]

Despite a half decade of jihadist occupation and two decades of protracted insurgent violence, a 2019 survey noted that 85.1% of Afghans surveyed have no sympathy for the insurgency. 13.4% say they support the insurgency but cannot express why. Zabol and Oruzgan Provinces have the highest levels of support for the insurgency, not key provinces like Kandahar, Helmand, or those surrounding Kabul.[14]

In Kandahar Province, the situation in early 2020 resembled the situation extant in 2005. The insurgents attempted to maintain a shadow government and operated to one extent or another in the districts outside of Kandahar City, but had no apparent central leadership in the province. They were not able to regain the strength nor the influence mustered there between 2006 and 2009. Indeed, criminal and tribal elements pretended to be Taliban in the rural areas to accomplish their objectives, so it is difficult to accurately measure the insurgency's actual strength at this time, which may have been lower than alleged.[15]

In early 2020, the Trump administration began withdrawing troops from Afghanistan and by June that number stood at 8600. The TTP, which was not part of the Doha negotiations between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban, was encouraged by this and reunified a number of anti-government Taliban affiliates inside Afghanistan with Al Qaeda's assistance throughout July and August.[16] On 8 October, the Taliban information organization acknowledged and welcomed a Tweet by President Trump that

American troops would be home by Christmas. Three days later insurgent groups mounted an assault on Lashkar Gah in Helmand Province via the Nad Ali and Nawa districts and cut Highway 1 to Kandahar. Two days after that, Afghan security forces launched a major operation with American air support and threw back the insurgents by 19 October. The insurgents resorted to district-level terrorism after this failure until they tried again in January 2021, launching another failed attack from Nawa.[17]

At the same time, insurgent operations slowly ramped up in Kandahar Province with small clashes against security forces in Arghandab in late October and early November. Further announcements of American troop withdrawals in late November 2020 appear to have emboldened the insurgency in Kandahar Province. Initial indicators that something larger was afoot included the arrest of Pakistani infiltrators in Spin Boldak; reports that Pakistan was secretly meeting Afghan tribal leaders in early January; and the assassination of moderate religious clerics in Kandahar City. In mid-January, insurgents reinforced their efforts in Arghandab and Dand districts, which in turn prompted an Afghan security forces operation that went into Zharey, Panjwayi, Dand and Arghandab districts. The difference this time was that this successful Afghan operation was conducted without significant American support. In effect, the situation in southern Afghanistan at that time was similar to the situation encountered by the coalition in 2006. It is equally clear that entities external to Afghanistan once again played a role in revitalizing the insurgency and generating ongoing instability in the country.[18]

By July 2021, however, Taliban forces fought their way into western Kandahar City and eventually defeated the police, NDS, Barakzai tribal militias, and an ANA commando unit that valiantly fought to protect the city. By early August, Taliban forces penetrated key districts in Kabul and mounted urban terrorist operations until they could be reinforced from the south and west. The Ghani government fled, leaving a power vacuum that a triumphant Mullah Baradar, delivered to Kandahar Air Field on board an American-made C-17 of the Qatari Air Force, filled at the end of August.

The immediate public analysis of this state of affairs acrimoniously focused on the performance, or non-performance of the Afghan National Army and, by implication, how effective the Canadian training role was in building that army. The reality of the situation is that Afghanistan and its army changed significantly since the Canadian Army departed in 2014. It is those factors that led to what appears on the surface to have been a rapid collapse of that force, but in fact this was the result of a sophisticated and externally enabled campaign plan executed in a superior fashion against a government that was incapable of opposing it effectively. What Canadian training staffs did or did not do from 2011 to 2014 nearly a decade ago could not have affected this outcome one way or another in 2021.

One view is that the Ghani government was continuously bombarded with Western demands to get a grip on corruption, with the threat that aid would be withheld if this insoluble problem were not solved. As a result, the Ghani government overreacted and increased centralization in the government. This centralization and the means by which it was undertaken not only damaged hard-won government bureaucratic mechanisms but also antagonized the fragile relationships that existed between the Kabul-based president and the power brokers in the provinces, particularly those among the tribes in southern Afghanistan.[19]

At the same time, the anti-corruption drive forced the retirement of over a thousand Afghan National Army officers, most of whom were the experienced commanders who had cut their teeth in the 1990s in the Northern Alliance, and later in the ANA against the Taliban and its allies in the seventeen years of the ANA's existence. Also of note is the fact that the ANA fought this war for nearly two decades with continuous attrition of experienced leaders and key personnel.[20] There is irony that Soviet governance methods, including over-centralization of power and a purge of the armed forces, played a role in the collapse of Afghanistan, not just the withdrawal of American air power and ISTAR support.

Preliminary analysis in 2021 suggests that the following occurred. At some point in late 2020, the various Taliban groups were slowly brought together and alliances re-established both in northern and southern Afghanistan. In early 2021, emissaries were sent to Pashtun tribal leaders in southern Afghanistan to sound them out as to their feelings towards the Ghani government. For several months negotiations were carried out with them as plans were made to enable the new Taliban alliance with technology and to recruit and train reinforcements from inside Pakistan. At the same time, it appears as though emissaries also approached elements within the ANA to sound them out as to their intentions if there were Taliban moves on Kandahar City. The message was that the coming wave was motivated by anti-Ghani Pashtun nationalism, not "Talibanism" per se, and that the tribes should get on board and provide momentum to it, not oppose it.

The Taliban's externally-enabled campaign plan in Kandahar was essentially the same plan that was launched against Canadian forces in 2006, except this time it succeeded. After fighting their way into Zharey and Panjwayi districts, supported from the Horn of Panjwayi, the Taliban assault overran the ANA forces that were dispersed for counterinsurgency operations. Some units ran out of ammunition, likely the result of the ANA's problematic logistic system, and surrendered. In some cases these personnel were disarmed and sent home. They were later killed singly by Taliban teams at night. Others, especially ANA SOF and Commando units, were executed outright. Abdul Rezziq-associated personnel, an estimated 300 people, were murdered wholesale in Spin Boldak. Subsequently, Arghandab District, home of Alikozais, changed sides. Several tribal leaders in Kandahar

suddenly declared themselves to be neutral with predictable negative effects on motivation, morale, and cohesion within the security forces. Reinforced with Urdu-speaking personnel equipped with looted ANSF small arms stocks, the Taliban groups cut off and then surrounded Kandahar City. With the ANA and most of the tribal militias neutralized, it was left up to the police, NDS personnel, ANA special forces, and the police (read: Barakzai militia) from Daman District to resist. This resistance ended on 15 August with the fighting withdrawal to Kandahar Air Field and the pickup by C-130 aircraft of an ANA special forces unit. This operation was facilitated by Ahmad Faizai, who served as an interpreter with the Canadian Army during the course of the war and rose to be Kandahar airport manager in 2010 and later head of the aviation authority's security division. Hundreds of Canadian-affiliated personnel were unable to escape Kandahar City.[21]

The chaotic and bungled Canadian non-combatant evacuation operation conducted in Kabul in August 2021 is beyond the scope of this history. These traumatic events plus the end-game of the Ghani government and the Taliban occupation of large parts of Afghanistan inevitably led to questioning Canada's involvement in Afghanistan. The debate will and should continue. That said, any intellectually honest assessment of that involvement must take into account what Canada set out to do in Afghanistan and measure it against what was accomplished, and what could reasonably be accomplished in that environment. That is the purpose of this history.

ENDNOTES

1. This section on the MTTF is drawn from an interview with BGen Chuck Lamarre, Ottawa, 10 December 2012 and an undated final Mission Transition Task Force briefing.

2. See Nelly LaHoud et al, *Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Laden Sidelined?* (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2012) at https://www.ctc.usma.edu/letters-from-abbottabad-bin-ladin-sidelined/ Indeed, according to Lin Noueihed and Alex Warren's *The Battle for the Arab Spring: Revolution, Counter-Revolution and the Making of a New Era*, Al Qaeda appears to have played little, if any, role at all.

3. Ali Soufan, "Hamza bin Laden: From Steadfast Son to al-Qa'idas's Leader in Waiting," *CTC Sentinel* September 2017 Vol. 10 Issue 8, pp. 1-7.

4. Amira Jadoon, et al., "Challenging the ISK Brand in Afghanistan-Pakistan: Rivalries and Divided Loyalties", *CTC Sentinel* April 2018 Vol. 11 Issue 4, pp. 23-29; Anne Stenersen, " Al Qa'ida's Comeback in Afghanistan and its Implications," *CTC Sentinel* September 2016 Vol. 9, Issue 9, pp. 21-27.

5. Of the early analyses of the ISIS/ISIL phenomena, the best is Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror* and Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror.* See particularly Clint Watts, "Deciphering Competition Between Al-Qa'ida and the Islamic State," *CTC Sentinel* July 2016 Vol. 9 Issue 7, pp. 1-6.

6. See Watts, "Deciphering Competition Between Al-Qa'ida and the Islamic State,"; Matthew DuPée, "Red on Red: Analyzing Afghanistan's Intra-Insurgency Violence," *CTC Sentinel* January 2018 Vol. 11 Issue 1, pp. 26-32.

7. See DuPée, "Red on Red: Analyzing Afghanistan's Intra-Insurgency Violence,"; Stenersen, " Al Qa'ida's Comeback in Afghanistan and its Implications," and *Al Qaeda and Islamic State Affiliates in Afghanistan* Congressional Research Service, 24 June 2020 at http://crsreports.congress.gov

8. See Jadoon, et al., "Challenging the ISK Brand in Afghanistan-Pakistan: Rivalries and Divided Loyalties"; DuPée, "Red on Red: Analyzing Afghanistan's Intra-Insurgency Violence," and Soufan, "Hamza bin Laden: From Steadfast Son to al-Qa'idas's Leader in Waiting." Afghan (and presumably coalition) intelligence organizations played a role in releasing information in 2015 that Mullah Omar died in 2013. To what extent this was calculated to generate disruption among the jihadist groups would make for an interesting study.

9. See DuPée, "Red on Red: Analyzing Afghanistan's Intra-Insurgency Violence" and Stenersen, "Al Qa'ida's Comeback in Afghanistan and its Implications."

10. DuPée, "Red on Red: Analyzing Afghanistan's Intra-Insurgency Violence."

11. Jadoon, et al., "Challenging the ISK Brand in Afghanistan-Pakistan: Rivalries and Divided Loyalties."

12. DuPée, "Red on Red: Analyzing Afghanistan's Intra-Insurgency Violence."

13. See Amira Jadoon and Andrew Mines, *Broken but Not Defeated: An Examination of State-led Operations Against Islamic State Khorasan in Afghanistan and Pakistan (2015-2018)* (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2020); Frud Bezhan, "The Taliban, The Government, And Islamic State: Who Controls What in Afghanistan?" Radio free Europe/Radio Liberty, 31 May 2020, https://www.rferl.org/a/taliban-government-islamic-state-who-controls-what-in-afghanistan-/30644646.html

14. The Asia Foundation, *A Survey of the Afghan People: Afghanistan in 2019* at https://asiafoundation.org/publication/afghanistan-in-2019-a-survey-of-the-afghan-people/

15. Telephone interview with Ahmad Faizai, 7 September 2020.

16. "Moderated by al-Qaeda, TTP oversaw reunification of splinter groups in Afghanistan: UN", *The Economic Times (India)*, 6 February 2021.

17. "Taliban welcome Trump Tweet promising early troop withdrawal," *The Economic Times (India)* 8 October 2020; "As violence flares in south Afghanistan, key questions answered," *Al Jazeera* 19 October 2020; "Police: 160 Taliban killed in Helmand's Nawa operation," *Pajhwok Afghan News* 19 January 2021.

18. Basher Ahmad Naadim, "Kandahar police arrest suspected Pakistan spies," *Pajhwok Afghan News* 15 January 2021; Yousaf Zarifi, "Ahmad Ali: Pakistan secretly invites Afghan tribal leaders," *Pajhwok Afghan News* 24 January 2021; Basher Ahmad Naadim "Army chief in Kandahar asks Taliban not to target civilians," *Pajhwok Afghan News* 27 January 2021; "Scores of fighters killed in Kandahar operation: MoD" *Pajhwok Afghan News* 30 January 2021; Basher Ahmad Naadim "Arghandab district to be purge of Taliban soon: Gen. Tadin," *Pajhwok Afghan News* 31 January 2021; "Religious scholar killed inside Kandahar home," *Pajhwok Afghan News* 31 January 2021; "Prayer leader gunned down in Kandahar," *Pajhwok Afghan News* 3 February 202;

19. Discussion between Nader Yama (former deputy minister of IDLG in the Ghani government), Quentin Innes, and Sean Maloney, 18 August 21.

20. *Ibid.*

21. This preliminary narrative is based on the author's communications with Canadian affiliated personnel who texted details of the collapse of Kandahar City to him while it was in progress throughout July 2021.

CONCLUSION

*"This is a society that almost **died!**"*

– Ambassador Omar Samad
to the author

The dominant theme of the 2007–2011 period of Canada's war in Afghanistan was discontinuity in the effort to stabilize Afghanistan and help its government and people protect themselves from internal and external threats. Issues related to continuity permeated the whole Afghanistan enterprise whether it was the efforts of the international community, the NATO ISAF effort, the American effort, or, ultimately, the Canadian effort. Problems with continuity in all four areas severely attenuated the Canadian Army's capacity in the counterinsurgency fight for Kandahar province and forced the army's deployed formations and units to expend as much time fighting the effects of discontinuity as they did combating the insurgency. Let us deal with each area point by point.

The Allies and Continuity

As we have seen in Volume I, the inability of several European nations to comprehensively and aggressively address the Security Sector Reform problem areas under the Bonn Agreement in late 2001 had significant long-term effects on southern Afghanistan. There were no German-trained police in Kandahar province by 2006. There was no functioning Italian-mentored legal system in Kandahar province by 2007. British counter-narcotics efforts alienated the population of Helmand province in 2006, while selective application of these efforts contributed to a reduction in political legitimacy in Kandahar province in 2006-2007. The bulk of the American-trained Afghan army was stationed around Kabul and in American-commanded Regional Command (East). Equally important was the 2004 decision by the French-led ISAF to not participate in the formulation of a comprehensive national reconstruction strategy. It was only through Canadian Army-assisted efforts in Kabul, in this case the Strategic Advisory Team-Afghanistan, that such a strategy emerged three years later, a strategy that could be coupled to the existing bottom-up reconstruction approach favoured by the Afghans. To succeed in a counterinsurgency environment,

a nation must possess respected police, a functioning judiciary, and maintain government legitimacy. All three were in desperately short supply in southern Afghanistan more than half a decade after the Bonn Agreement.

One can argue that without security, it is difficult to establish and build these institutions. What were the sources of that insecurity in southern Afghanistan? At the time many debated the nature of that problem. Was it a Pakistan-based insurgency, where the resurgent Taliban were instruments of Pakistani colonialism or pawns of Al Qaeda's global agenda? Or was it an indigenous insurgency propelled by a downward spiral of government legitimacy fueled by corruption? It was, ultimately, a combination of all of these things. In this we can find fault with the American effort. Criticizing the rapid refocusing of American attention away from Afghanistan towards Iraq in 2002-2003 is an easy and perhaps simplistic answer to a complex problem. The reality is that neither the Bush administration nor the Obama administration were able to conceptualize a solution to and then effectively address the conundrum of an unstable, nuclear-armed Pakistan that was giving sanctuary to the entities degrading the reconstruction effort in Afghanistan. They were assisted in this by deceptive Pakistani administrations and other parallel powers that fostered and accommodated insurgent and terrorist groups as a hedge against American withdrawal from Afghanistan.[1] We must not ignore the fact that there were a multitude of Pakistani corporate interests that profited from the international community's continued involvement in the Afghanistan enterprise, and those corporate interests were, and remain, intertwined with the Pakistani national security state.[2]

The small numbers of American and indigenous Afghan forces in Kandahar province were able to provide an acceptable level of security from 2002 up to 2005. When the floodgates burst in 2006 and Pakistan-based fighters poured into the south, however, those days were over. The fact that this wave ran up against the Canadian retaining wall west of Kandahar City signaled that a new phase of the war was in play. It is difficult to conceive of a situation between 2002 and 2005 that would have warranted an increased number of American troops in Kandahar province, though there were rumblings in mid- to late 2005. One cannot read history backwards for political convenience.

The fact that the German police and the Italian judicial experts were not ensconced in Kandahar assessing the situation and conducting capacity building during that relatively secure period counts as a major failure, as does the application of an overly aggressive British-led counter-narcotics program right after it was demonstrated that there were similar problems with that approach in Wardak province in 2004. Where the Americans come up short in Kandahar province was the discontinuity between the capacity building efforts of the American PRT and the Canadian PRT in 2005. What was the American PRT doing prior to July 2005? If it did anything, that information was not communicated effectively to the

Canadian PRT. It was almost as if capacity building in the province started in mid-2005, and even then the first Canadian PRT could only try and identify what was going on in the province and with its population. The PRT was not in a position to implement comprehensive programs because it lacked the necessary basic information to do so.

The battles west and north of Kandahar City in the summer and fall of 2006 threw the Pakistan-based, jihadist-augmented insurgency back onto its heels. These combined Canadian-American-Afghan efforts produced not only an enemy pause, but they forced the insurgent leadership to start a reactive-adaptive cycle to match the counterinsurgency effort in Kandahar province. It is here that discontinuity crept into the NATO ISAF program. This manifested itself mostly at the Regional Command (South) level. The inherent instability of a multinational headquarters rotating every nine months between Canada, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands was imported from Bosnia and inappropriately applied to southern Afghanistan. Bluntly put, this state of affairs permitted national agendas to play out depending on who was in command of Regional Command (South) at a given time. There were several agendas but the most important issue here was the debate over the primacy of Helmand or Kandahar in the ISAF effort in the south.

The situation as it stood was that the problem in Helmand province was largely created by British policy and activities, and to a lesser extent, American ones. The British spent a lot of effort ensuring that their operational deficiencies in Helmand were addressed, and this conflicted with the reality that the enemy was focused on cutting off and infiltrating Kandahar City. British apologists will no doubt take issue with this conclusion. However, it was evident to numerous Canadian officers in Kabul, at Regional Command (South) and at Joint Task Force Afghanistan that the British used substantial influence to ensure resources were shifted west to deal with Helmand at the expense of the Canadian effort in Kandahar. These influence games were more obvious during periods when the British commanded Regional Command (South) but continued throughout the period in question. Canada's position was not helped by relinquishing various influence tools (Canada's jettisoning of her medium-lift helicopter capability in the 1990s and the slow re-acquisition of that capability after 2001, was one of these) nor was it helped by fear in some Canadian Army quarters of being tarred by the allies with the same "CAN'T BAT" brush that Canadians had been in the 1991 Gulf War and in Bosnia back in 1995. One must have the tools as well as the attitude to wield influence when dealing with allies that deploy more capability.

A question that must be answered someday is why Canada was unable to muster a coordinated diplomatic influence campaign in Kabul to get resources diverted to Kandahar province when they were needed earlier on. Canadian Army leaders were able, on occasion, to identify and influence similar activity when it came to increasing the number of Afghan National Army battalions in Kandahar province and DFAIT had some success in the police

realm. In that they competed with American and British commanders, both conventional and special forces, who wanted Afghan forces diverted to Helmand, Regional Command (East) and elsewhere.

The Canadian Army and Continuity

In keeping with the discontinuity theme, we now come to the Canadian Army and its role in the Kandahar drama. Was there discontinuity in the Canadian Army effort because, as some assert, there were six strong-willed TF Kandahar commanders and eight strong-willed battle group commanders trying to independently implement their own ideas over the course of five years? Or was it merely a situation where each commander was forced to adapt as the situation evolved?

At the time, it appeared to some that each TF Kandahar commander and staff had a new approach that conflicted with approach taken by the previous rotation, and it appeared that some battle group commanders sought to compete with their predecessors so that they could get in on 'kinetic' action. At first glance, this is not surprising given that the Canadian Army selected aggressive "Type A" personalities for command, and with command comes a certain level of ego. It would be disingenuous to suggest that ego played no role whenever plans changed. However, the impact of these factors may be less than initially anticipated in some of the cases. Let us address this issue.

As we have seen in this history, there were six TF Kandahar commanders and staffs. We can divide them into two groups: those who commanded Canadian forces throughout Kandahar province, and those who had a more limited span of control once the American influx took place. In the first group, the Grant headquarters built its baseline on the foundation that the Fraser-led CTF AEGIS established in 2006: Canadian and coalition forces generally fought west of the city in selected districts to keep the enemy away from the city and prevent them from interdicting Highway 1, while capacity building with the Afghan National Army and conducting CIMIC activities to enable other government departments. The Laroche, Thompson, and Vance-led TF Kandahar headquarters conducted variations on this theme, adjusting as required as the circumstances changed in the districts and in the city. The subsequent Menard/Vance, and Milner TF Kandahar headquarters applied their resources to a pair of districts but with the same overall idea: fight the insurgency in the districts, keep it out of Kandahar City, and capacity-build where possible. At that level and in terms of intent, there was continuity.

How exactly these commanders and their headquarters implemented ideas to meet that intent differed mostly by geographical location and available forces. Grant focused Canadian efforts on Zharey and Panjwayi districts, with an eye towards Arghandab after Naqib's death. Laroche developed a plan to transfer control of Zharey and Panjwayi to Afghan forces and

focus on Arghandab and Shah Wali Kot. Thompson wanted to identify Stability Boxes in Zharey and Panjwayi and hopefully in Arghandab, while Vance worked out the Key Village Approach conceptualization to address the increased primacy of Kandahar City security. All of them employed some variation of the Clear-Hold-Build operational approach. Similarly, when the Menard/Vance, and Milner headquarters were able to concentrate Canadian resources on Panjwayi and Dand districts, they also applied a variation of Clear-Hold-Build. In terms of operating methodology, there may have been more continuity in the Canadian Army effort than previously believed or understood, but there remains room for debate. Fundamentally, it was all about keeping the insurgency as far away from the city as possible and interdicting support for the urban terrorism campaign inside the city from those districts, to varying degrees.

What stands out, however, is the constant shifting back and forth of Canadian Army resources between Zharey, Panjwayi east and west, Shah Wali Kot-Arghandab, and Dand. This led to discontinuity in the Canadian effort in some districts, particularly in Arghandab and in Panjwayi. The Canadian government simply did not deploy enough forces and resources to meet all of its objectives as the situation evolved throughout 2008. This in turn forced the in-country commanders to maintain an active defence west of the city instead of deepening the Hold, as it were. The key district ultimately was Arghandab. The methodology that steadily and incrementally attritted the power structure in that district was a different fight from the one encountered in Zharey and Panjwayi and was not addressed systematically by either Canadian or Afghan leaders. The selection of strategic goals in districts like Shah Wali Kot and Arghandab that could not be adequately defended without relinquishing the tenuous hold on critical districts like Zharey, Panjwayi and Dand, and then not providing the resources necessary to do both, counts as a major Canadian failure in the campaign.

Similarly, the constant shifting of resources to Helmand province at the expense of the campaign in Kandahar province played a part in this problem. Canada's guileless attempts to acquire allied resources like Afghan kandaks, helicopters, and ISR platforms, and maintain them in support of the Canadian effort in Kandahar foundered on the hard realism of British domestic politics related to counter-narcotics policy and its relationship to their campaign in Helmand. With an increasingly disjointed diplomatic effort in Kabul, particularly after the loss of Strategic Advisory Team-Afghanistan, Canada reduced her chances of leveraging relative power in support of Canadian objectives in Kandahar.

If we are going to criticize others for their levels of commitment, and we justifiably can, we should also look at ourselves and our policies. The question is this: why did a nation of 35 million people have trouble sustaining a small brigade's work of troops in Afghanistan for six years the 2000s when a nation of 11 million could field five divisions to fight in Europe for six years the 1940s?[3]

Insurmountable Challenges?

That said, the Canadian Army ran up against serious challenges that continuity in intent and operational methodology could not completely address. The first of these was the insurgent production line in Pakistan. There was no means of stopping the infiltration of weapons and fighters from Pakistan, and little or no effective Canadian diplomatic pressure was applied to Iran, Pakistan, and others to cease supplying insurgents with weapons and ammunition. Chinese 107mm rockets, Iranian RPGs and IED components, and Pakistani mines flowed in throughout the course of the war. At the same time other Canadian government departments and their associates pursued a variety of high-profile projects in Africa to limit the spread of small arms and the use of child soldiers. Why a similar concerted Canadian effort was not undertaken in the Afghanistan-Pakistan arena is an important question.[4]

Similarly, pressure was not applied to close madrassas that were indoctrinating suicide bombers on the other side of the Durand Line. Without a serious Pakistani campaign to suppress the Taliban in Quetta, Chaman, Barab Cha and their environs, Canadian soldiers were forced to confront waves and waves of jihadis making their annual pilgrimage to die in the face of Canadian guns. Indeed, this was a Pakistani proxy war in Afghanistan to keep Afghanistan under its heel, something those in the halls of power refused to publicly admit or internally acknowledge out of fear of instability in Pakistan and its relationship to its nuclear capability.[5] This was a situation that the Canadian Army's effort in Afghanistan had absolutely no control over. The only means that the Canadian Army had of influencing the enemy in Pakistan was to thwart them from achieving their objectives in Afghanistan, in this case, preventing them from interdicting and seizing control of Kandahar City, and by building up the Afghan security forces as much as possible. The Canadian Army succeeded in those areas.

The second serious challenge was the steadily decreasing legitimacy of the Afghan government. The Canadian Army's intent at securing the Kandahar City approaches to disrupt the enemy, and its Clear-Hold-Build approach, could not necessarily address questions of legitimacy. Simply put, the Popalzai power structure in Kandahar was not accepted by elements in the population as the legitimate provincial leadership. Indeed, the Popalzai power structure was antagonistic to anti-Taliban tribal groups, even with the prospect of a resurgent Taliban at the gates. Some Canadian leaders bear a modicum of responsibility in maintaining the "better the devil you know" relationship with elements in the Popalzai power structure, rather than recognizing earlier that it was undermining the counterinsurgency effort and addressing this issue systematically in Kandahar, Kabul, Washington, and Ottawa. In addition, the failure to recognize the primacy of religion in Kandahari society and politics early on in the campaign, and act accordingly with appropriate programming, is another Canadian Army responsibility.

That responsibility must be offset, however, with those of other Canadian government departments whose portfolios included the governance aspects of the mission but who proved incapable of identifying and seriously addressing these problems in any systematic fashion. In the end, however, the Afghans themselves bear the ultimate responsibility for not maintaining a legitimate posture in Kandahar. They made choices and bad ones at that. To what extent the Canadian Army, as opposed to other government departments, could have influenced those choices remains debatable.

The third serious challenge was the international community's failure to apply resources in critical areas which produced conditions forced on the Canadian Army in Kandahar. These included dysfunctional or no police; the lack of a judicial system; overly-aggressive counter-narcotics operations; minimal Afghan army capacity and so on. Prior to Afghanistan, the Canadian Army was structured to apply violence as required, when required and was not structured to handle capacity-building in any of these areas. These conditions were overcome by Canada's soldiers through significant and in some cases dramatic adaptation during the course of the war. When the dysfunctional police needed mentoring and the Canadian Government limited CIVPOL operations 'outside the wire', Military Police and combat arms soldiers were formed into Police Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams to handle these tasks. When the fatigued and undermanned Afghan army forces needed mentoring and access to Canadian enablers, the number of Canadian Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams was increased. When there was overwhelming infrastructure decay and damage and Afghans needed employment, the Construction Management Organization and Specialist Engineer Team were stood up to address those needs. Where there was a lack of information on Kandahari politics and society, CIMIC and White Situational Awareness teams collected it. When the Canadian Army lacked the means of communicating with Afghans, PSYOPS teams were deployed.

Yes, there were problems with all of these new organizations. Yes, there was no such thing as 100-percent success. By 2011, however, all of these organizations were in heavy play and more importantly, their efforts were coordinated. These stop-gap measures, shielded by the battle group, the OMLT, its Afghan partners, and American air support became the main effort over time and played a valuable role in stabilizing the districts. It is unfortunate that other entities were unable to capitalize and build on their efforts earlier on in the conflict.

Finally, the Canadian effort in Afghanistan was severely impeded by the imposition of a Canadian civilian leadership team dominated by individuals with expertise in international trade, diplomacy, and Canadian government infighting, instead of strategy and coalition operations in a conflict zone. The relative inexperience of these individuals rendered the possibility of Canada generating a coherent strategy or generating the requisite influence

to support the effort in Kandahar, less and less likely as time went on. Choices were made that strongly suggest that the context of the Ottawa power game was more important than issues like the expenditure of the Canadian people's blood and treasure in a violent test of wills against a malevolent foe overseas.

The cognitive dissonance exhibited by those brought up within the confines of the Ottawa power game, perhaps, prevented them from realizing that public support for the mission was more likely if the Canadian people were directly presented with the truth of why Canada was in Afghanistan and not the contrived manipulation of 'metrics' expressed to them through a media equally inexperienced with presenting the complexities of conflict zones. These were obstacles that the Canadian Army simply could not overcome in the short time granted to it to accomplish its tasks in Kandahar.

Taking the Medium View

In a positive vein, there were notable Canadian Army achievements in the Kandahar campaign. Canada held the line in Kandahar province with limited forces over a protracted period until Regional Command (South) could be massively reinforced by the American influx starting in 2009. During that time the insurgency did not take control of Kandahar City, nor was it able to interdict the city. It is recognized that the insurgency did operate in Kandahar City but it was never able to fully achieve his objectives there. Similarly, Kandahar Air Field was never seriously interdicted during the course of the campaign, nor was the regional trade route, Highway 4.

The insurgency never achieved total control of the districts adjacent to Kandahar City and was challenged at every turn by the Canadian Army and its allies. The plethora of operations conducted from 2006 to 2011 and described herein bear this out in some detail. The population did not shift its allegiance to the Taliban, as it had in the 1990s. Though the population in those districts may have remained on the fence, they did not whole-heartedly support the insurgency and when they did so it was out of fear, or activated grievances, not conviction. The enemy was never able to fully transfer from negative governance to competitive governance except in certain insignificant localities.

Another significant achievement was the safe deployment of the Dutch task force to Oruzgan and the British task force to Helmand without incident in 2006. Those achievements were made possible by the efforts of CTF AEGIS and TF ORION in their battles during 2006. NATO ISAF Stage III expansion was accomplished and allowed the coalition to challenge insurgent efforts in areas other beyond Kandahar Province. The enemy was also thwarted in Helmand with the assistance of the Canadian Army on multiple occasions between 2006 and 2008, but most particularly in 2006.

The Canadian Army's most significant long-term achievement in Kandahar was capacity-building in the Afghan National Army, conducted largely by the OMLT with support from the Canadian team in Kabul. In 2006, the single kandak deployed in Kandahar Province was barely capable of platoon- or company-level operations while embedded in a Canadian battle group. By 2010, a full Afghan brigade was mounting battalion-level operations alongside the brigade-sized Canadian-led ISAF task force, and by 2011, it was conducting its own counterinsurgency fight in Panjwayi District.

Canadian special operations forces also made an important contribution. By targeting enemy leaders and removing a significant number of them from the fight, they repeatedly decapitated the insurgency and broke down its effectiveness as the war continued.

Ultimately, the Canadian Army effort in Kandahar province after 2005 bought that precious commodity, time. Time for capacity-building efforts to take root; time for others to reconsider strategy; time for allied forces to redeploy; and time for Afghans to reassess their place in the world.

Taking the Long View

Speaking to larger issues, there is some symmetry between the Canadian Army's involvement in Afghanistan from 2007 to 2011, and in 2002. In 2002, the 3 PPCLI Battle Group protected Kandahar Air Field as American special operations forces and intelligence specialists ranged from it seeking information on Al Qaeda's global operations so those operations could be attenuated. Some of those planned operations were of the same magnitude as the 9-11 attacks. We also know that subsequent measures taken against Al Qaeda prevented the loss of two Air Canada airliners in 2006, attacks that would have likely killed 600 passengers, most of whom would have been Canadian.[6] By 2008-2009, American forces were re-focused against Al Qaeda sanctuary areas in Pakistan. The MQ-1 Predators and MQ-9 Reapers and the targeting staffs involved in those missions operated from facilities based in Afghanistan.[7] By 2010 a large-scale aerial campaign against Al Qaeda leadership targets using these forces was in full swing. Kandahar Air Field played a significant role in this campaign and was protected, in a broad sense, by Canadian forces operating in Kandahar province. In one analysis, the suppression campaign against Al Qaeda in Pakistan forced

> Al Qaeda to switch from being an organization where its leaders exerted control at strategic, operational, and to a lesser degree tactical levels to an increasingly decentralized organization, whose leaders seek to influence strategy through public communiques but have very little operational capacity and practically none at the tactical level….due to a debilitated central core [Al Qaeda affiliates] received increasingly less support from the parent organization.[8]

These operations killed

> three successive incumbents of the position of chief executive of the organization…three members of the advisory council…one member of the military committee leadership…one of the religious committee…two of the finance committee…one of the Al Shabab (propaganda wing)…17 of the external operations unit including two unit heads…25 members of the unit with responsibility for operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan, four members of the training unit, and one of the unit tasked with WMD development….[9]

As the first generation leaders were progressively killed, the organization became susceptible to infiltration as it needed new members to backfill those positions. Those members subsequently had the opportunity to move into the higher levels of the organization and provide intelligence which in turn disrupted terrorist operations before they could occur.[10]

Finally, on 2 May 2011, American special operations forces, launched from and supported by bases in Afghanistan, killed Osama Bin Laden in Abbottabad, Pakistan.[11] Such operations against Al Qaeda would have been impossible if the Taliban had retaken control of southern Afghanistan earlier in the decade or if the entire country had been enmeshed in another civil war similar to the one endured in 1992–93. By challenging the Taliban in the south and thwarting them from attaining their objectives, the Canadian Army, in the broadest sense, played a supporting role in this endeavour.

Bin Laden himself was forced to watch the Arab Spring spectacle from a small television in his cell-like Abbottabad fortress house and was impotent in influencing those actions until the day he died. Exploitation of the material recovered during Operation NEPTUNE SPEAR depicts an organization boxed into a corner, with untrustworthy, unwieldy and uncontrolled regional affiliates losing leaders on a daily basis while its base forces were attritted in Waziristan. Bin Laden tried to 're-brand' Al Qaeda and jump start his revolution from somewhere other than Pakistan.[12] Al Qaeda can by no means take credit for the Arab Spring.

Al Qaeda would not be in this position if Operation ENDURING FREEDOM had not been mounted in 2001. And, if both OEF and the International Security Assistance Force did not achieve some semblance of stability afterwards in Afghanistan, Bin Laden and Al Qaeda would surely have come right back into Afghanistan, re-established their facilities and continued with their global programme. A new generation of jihadis motivated by such a withdrawal would have posed an even greater threat to world order a decade earlier than the emergence of the Islamic State 'caliphate'.

And, if we take the long view, the disruption and progressive attrition of the Al Qaeda leadership caste in Pakistan by Afghanistan-based American efforts will likely to be seen as beneficial elsewhere in the world. As a 2013 intelligence assessment put it, "Senior personnel losses in 2012, amplifying losses and setbacks since 2008, have degraded core al-Qa'ida to a point that the group is probably unable to carry out complex, large-scale attacks in the West."[13]

There is another crucial aspect of Canada's confrontation with Al Qaeda and the Taliban that is easily overlooked in the race to criticize the incremental pace of developmental progress in southern Afghanistan and the difficulties of grappling with Pakistan-supported proxy forces. There were two events that spurred Osama Bin Laden and his supporters to embark on the path of unlimited violence that led to our involvement in Afghanistan. The first of these was the attack by Shi'a fundamentalists against the American-led multinational peacekeeping force in Lebanon in 1983 and the subsequent withdrawal of that force after the deaths of 241 Americans, and 58 French troops. The second was the decision by the United States to withdraw from the multinational armed humanitarian mission in Somalia in 1993 after suffering eighteen killed and then withdraw supporting forces from Yemen because of a terrorist threat warning. In Osama Bin Laden's own words:

> After a little resistance, the American troops left after achieving nothing. They left after claiming that they were the largest power on earth. They left after some resistance from powerless, poor, unarmed people whose only weapon is the belief in God Almighty, and who did not fear the fabricated American media lies. We learned from those who fought there, that they were surprised to see the low spiritual morale of the American fighters in comparison with the experience they had with the Russian fighters [in Afghanistan]. The Americans ran away from those fighters who fought and killed them…If the US still thinks and brags that it still has this kind of power, even after all those successive defeats in Vietnam, Beirut, Aden, and Somalia, then let its troops go back to those who are awaiting its return.[14]

Similarly, the withdrawal of UN forces from Somalia stimulated the calculated targeting of Belgian UN forces in Rwanda in 1994 which in turn precipitated the Rwandan massacre when the international forces were seen to be weakened. When Canadian peacekeeping forces arrived in Haiti the same year during Operation CAULDRON, there was a warning that Haitian elements had learned from Somalia and Rwanda and publicly threatened to turn Port au Prince into "Mogadishu."

The lesson here is that Canada and her army did not withdraw from Afghanistan precipitously and thus sent a message that Canada would not repeat the failures of Somalia and Rwanda (or for that matter, UNPROFOR). Though this was not apparently codified in any formal Canadian strategic thinking, Canada demonstrated to those shadowy jihadist leaders and their backers in Pakistan and elsewhere that we would not cave in to economy of effort terrorism. Canada stayed in the fight when others wavered or were distracted elsewhere. Canadian soldiers held the ground in Kandahar while others made up their minds to get back in, take the baton, and run the final leg of the race.

After Afghanistan, the Canadian people should not be seen to be a weak, easy target for the next shadowy figure who, like Hitler, Stalin, and Bin Laden, thinks that they have a better way to run the world. Canadian cultural rhetoric to the contrary, it is important to have resolve and be seen to be strong. As Clausewitz noted, the moral is to the physical as three is to one. And the soldiers of the Canadian Army in Afghanistan put Canada back into the black after the disasters of the 1990s.

As we have seen in these volumes, the Canadian Army played a key role stabilizing Afghanistan and disrupting Al Qaeda. The Canadian people should understand that the valiant actions of its soldiers in Afghanistan fit into the broader and larger vista of world history, not the limited one populated with carping criticism over relatively minor issues, or by personalities who have agendas related to relative power in the comparatively narrow corridors of Ottawa.

In the Final Measure

We Canadians went to Afghanistan as part of a larger UN-mandated international effort to smash a global terrorist movement that threatened and attacked North America and planned further attacks against Canadian interests and allies. We also believed we were obligated, after that task was well underway, to assist the Afghan people in re-establishing themselves after 20 years of unabated war. Canadian motives for deploying soldiers to Afghanistan were legitimate and acceptable ones. However, there were, and remain, entities in Pakistan that do not desire peace in Afghanistan for strategic and economic reasons. There were, and remain, groups in Afghanistan that do not desire peace for tribal and economic reasons. Canada did not sign on to fight against the proxies of a nuclear-armed power that were funded by a global network of Wahhabists who were themselves engaged in their own regional fight against the Sufis, Shi'a, or other Islamic sects and the ethnicities who are their reservoirs. Canada also did not sign on to enrich Afghan power brokers at the expense of the Afghan people. By the time that Canada recognized that those conditions would not change through military force or by economic or political suasion, the correct decision was made by the Canadian government to end combat operations in southern Afghanistan and shift to influencing, where possible, the central government's evolving security forces.

That shift does not and should never overshadow what the Canadian Army accomplished in Afghanistan. The collapse of the coalition effort in Kandahar province would have been a disaster for the Afghan people and it would have destroyed all of the painstaking reconstruction and development work that had been done between 2002 and 2006. It would likely have unleashed an orgy of violence similar to what our soldiers encountered in the Balkans and in Africa in the 1990s. Canada was part of an effort that provided Afghans a means to get off of their knees and walk again. Where the Afghans go on their journey is up to them. The Canadian Army can stand proud that its efforts in Kandahar Province saved Kandahar City and bought the Afghans time.

Mishelle Brown's husband, WO Dennis Brown, was killed in action on 4 March 2009. When she was asked whether she thought the war could be won, she said, "We may not beat the Taliban, but there are lots of things in our lives that we cannot beat … You can't beat crime, but do you give up? Do you stop? Absolutely not."[15]

ENDNOTES

1. See Peter Tomsen *The Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflicts, and the Failures of Great Powers* (New York: Public Affairs Press, 2011).
2. As described in Ayesha Siddiqa in *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy* (London: Pluto Press, 2007). We await, someday, for a more detailed study of the intersection between the Pashtun trucking mafias, the Pakistani Army logistics system, the insurgencies in Pakistan, and the ISAF and OEF ground resupply effort.
3. With due recognition of the fact that the Government did authorize an increase in the number of Canadian Forces personnel by 3000 people after 2008.
4. For example, former DND deputy minister and Ambassador to Italy Bob Fowler did not support Canadian efforts in the Afghanistan/Pakistan region. Former UNAMIR commander Senator Romeo Dallaire's views were not actively against the Afghanistan mission but more actively in support of increased Canadian involvement in Africa. See "Fowler Questions Afghanistan Mission" (9 September 2009) http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2009/09/09/fowler-diplomat-afghanistan-mission381.html; Sarah Hampson, "Romeo Dallaire Rages Against Canada," Globe and Mail (3 November 2010) http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/relationships/romo-dallaire-rages-against-canada/article4107485/; Chris Lambie, "Dallaire Defends Afghan Mission," Halifax Chronicle Herald (5 December 2006) http://cnews.canoe.ca/CNEWS/War_Terror/2006/12/05/2637710.html.
5. Peter Tomsen's damning voluminous work *The Wars of Afghanistan*, and David C. Isby's piercing *Afghanistan: Graveyard of Empires* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2012) set the standard in this area.
6. Aki Peritz and Eric Rosenbach, *Find Fix and Finish: Inside the Counterterrorism Campaigns that Killed Bin Laden and Devasted Al Qaeda* (New York: Public Affairs, 2012) p. 249.
7. See Matt J. Martin and Charles W. Sasser, *Predator: The Remote Control Air War Over Iraq and Afghanistan: A Pilots's Story* (Minneapolis: Zenith Press, 2010); Aki Peritz and Eric Rosenbach, *Find, Fix and Finish: Inside the Counterterrorism Camapaigns that Killed Bin Laden and Devasted Al Qaeda* (New York: Public Affairs, 2012); Matthew M. Aid, *Intel Wars: The Secret History of the Fight Against Terror* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2012).

8. Javier Jordan, "The Effectiveness of the Drone Campaign against Al Qaeda Central: A Case Study," *Journal of Strategic Studies* Vol. 37 No. 1 pp. 4-29.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.* See also Farhat Taj, "The Year of Drone Misinformation," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* Vol. 21 No. 3 September 2010 pp 529-535.
11. As described in Peter Bergen's *Manhunt: The Ten-Year Search for Bin Laden from 9/11 to Abbottabad* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2012).
12. Nelly Lahoud et al *Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Ladin Sidelined?* West Point: Combatting Terrorism Center, 3 May 2012. pp. 14-16.
13. "Statement for the Record: Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 12 March 2013" at http://odni.gov/files/documents/Intelligence%20Reports/2013%20ATA%20SFR%20for%20SSCI%2012%20Mar%202013.pdf
14. Bruce Lawrence (ed) *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden* (London: Verso Press, 2005) pp. 54-55.
15. "Soldier's widow says she was prepared," CTV News 4 March 2009 at https://www.ctvnews.ca/soldier-s-widow-says-she-was-prepared-for-his-death-1.375889

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APPENDIX A:

TASK FORCE NOMENCLATURE

The confusing terminology used for organizations leading the Canadian effort in Afghanistan requires detailed explanation. The main headquarters for the Canadian effort in Afghanistan after 2006 was Joint Task Force Afghanistan or JTF-A HQ. This organization encompassed all of the Canadian activities in the country as well as the logistical hub at Minhad air base in United Arab Emirates known as Camp Mirage. The 'joint' in JTF-A refers to the fact that both the army and air force had components that were part of the command. For our purposes in this history, the repeated use of JTF-A HQ or Joint Task Force Afghanistan becomes stylistically cumbersome. As a result, JTF-A HQ and its activities will use the designation TF Kandahar in the text. However, that designation is nuanced and requires explanation.

The predecessor command structure to Joint Task Force Afghanistan was Task Force Afghanistan, which stood up in August 2005. Task Force Afghanistan consisted of:

- Task Force Kabul forces
- the Theatre Support Element in Minhad, and
- the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team.

The Strategic Advisory Team-Afghanistan was a special bilateral arrangement that was supported by Task Force Afghanistan.

At that time, TF Kabul included:

- Canadian units assigned to the Kabul Multinational Brigade,
- the National Support Element, and
- the National Command Element
- the Canadians assigned to ISAF Headquarters.

Task Force Kandahar in its non-NATO form stood up in early 2006 under Task Force Afghanistan, and then essentially replaced Task Force Kabul after the move south. Task Force Afghanistan then transitioned to form Joint Task Force Afghanistan in late 2006.

The bulk of the command activity in the south after November 2006 was handled by what became known as Task Force Kandahar (TF Kandahar, better known as TFK). TF Kandahar became the NATO ISAF designation for the collection of Canadian units and Canadian-commanded allied units operating in Kandahar Province allocated to NATO under the command of NATO ISAF command, Regional Command (South), usually shortened to RC (South). The Canadian JTF-A commander and the NATO TF Kandahar commander were the same person. Some Canadian units were not NATO assets and were commanded by JTF-A, specifically, the National Support Element, certain intelligence organizations, and the Air Wing. The Canadian OMLT was a NATO resource, but for practical purposes reported to TF Kandahar.

Rotations of JTF Afghanistan Headquarters

Unlike the other units of JTF Afghanistan, which rotated every six months, the headquarters team deployed for nine months; therefore, headquarters rotation numbers do not align with those of other units of the task force that were deployed at the same time. Further confusion arose from Canada's decision to maintain Operation ATHENA as the code name for ISAF operations, despite the Kabul-to-Kandahar transition conducted under Operation ARCHER. After a revision to include TF Afghanistan HQ (best seen as an attempt to rationalize the past), the rotations of JTF Afghanistan HQ were numbered as follows:

- Rotation 3 (BGen Timothy Grant): deployed November 2006–September 2007
- Rotation 4 (BGen Guy Laroche): deployed September 2007–May 2008
- Rotation 5 (BGen Denis Thompson): deployed May 2008–February 2009
- Rotation 6 (BGen Jonathan Vance): deployed February–November 2009
- Rotation 7 (BGen Daniel Ménard, BGen Vance): deployed November 2009–September 2010
- Rotation 8 (BGen Dean Milner): deployed September 2010–June 2011

Task Forces Formed and Deployed by the Canadian Army

The task forces assembled, trained and deployed by the Canadian Army included the battle group, the PRT, the OMLT, and the NSE. They were given numerical designations that reflected a long-term Army rotation planning cycle; for example, TF 1-07 was used to designate personnel who would arrive during the first four months (or third of the year) of 2007; likewise, the troops of TF 3-07 deployed during that year's third four-month stretch. Each unit of the task force carried its number (e.g., the TF 1-07 Battle Group, and the TF 1-07 OMLT). Unfortunately, the system was not fully consistent; the addition of a signals squadron during Roto 6 of JTF Afghanistan HQ meant that the signals squadrons were offset from the other units of their task forces.

- TF 1-06, also called TF Orion, consisted of the 1 PPCLI Battle Group, the PRT and the NSE; deployed February–August 2006.

- TF 3-06: the 1 RCR Battle Group, the first OMLT, the PRT and the NSE; deployed August 2006–February 2007.

- TF 1-07: the 2 RCR Battle Group, the PRT, the expanded OMLT and the NSE; deployed February–August 2007

- TF 3-07: the 1 R22eR Battle Group, the PRT, the OMLT and the NSE; deployed August 2007–February 2008

- TF 1-08: the 2 PPCLI Battle Group, the PRT, the OMLT and the NSE; deployed February–September 2008

- TF 3-08: the 3 RCR Battle Group, the PRT, the OMLT and the NSE; deployed August 2008–February 2009

- TF 1-09: the 2 R22eR Battle Group, the PRT, the OMLT and the NSE; deployed February–August 2009

- TF 3-09: the 1 PPCLI Battle Group, the PRT, the OMLT and the NSE; deployed August 2009–February 2010

- TF 1-10: the 1 RCR Battle Group, the military components of the PRT, the OMLT and the NSE; deployed February–October 2010

- TF 3-10: the 1 R22eR Battle Group, the OMLT and the NSE; deployed October 2010–July 2011

Most battle groups were built around the first or second battalions of the three infantry regiments and in some cases companies from other regiments were included in battle groups as a third company. The OMLT and the PRT company came from the third battalions of the infantry regiments, that is, the light infantry battalions, and were heavily augmented from artillery and armoured regiments and units of the Primary Reserve.

APPENDIX B:

PAKISTAN AND THE INSURGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN 2007–2011

By November 2006, the North Waziristan peace deal signed the previous September was in tatters, with increased attacks into Regional Command (East) in Afghanistan and the Pakistani Taliban extending their influence into adjacent agencies in Pakistan. By January 2007, the Pakistani Taliban in South Waziristan, spurred on by what was happening to their north, broke their earlier peace deal with their government, which caused the government to intervene and the insurgents to retaliate with a campaign of suicide IED attacks that continued all spring.[1] Now both Waziristans were in flames.

The role of the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence organization and its alumni in regional affairs was under some coalition scrutiny by this time. Elements inside ISI, including some former ISI leaders, championed any peace deal that kept the Pakistani Army out of the Waziristans and some even castigated the government for intervening. Indeed, former ISI boss Hamid Gul was detained by the government for being somewhat outspoken in his support for the insurgents.[2] This is not surprising as ISI relationships with various entities in the region went back decades. Some of those entities were collaterally engaged in the narcotics trade. It is likely that some former personnel of the ISI were perhaps also so engaged. Or, as one study put it,

> The most problematic elements within the Pakistani state, however, are probably the ISID officers in the field who were tasked with managing the liaison relationship with the Taliban over the years. Some simply felt loyalty to old clients. Others are content to exploit their leadership's own ambivalence about the Taliban for either nationalist, ideological, or personal reasons …[3]

In any event, the ISI appeared to be less than committed to the success of operations against the Taliban in Waziristan, let alone in Quetta, where the Afghan Taliban went about unfettered.

By the spring of 2007, several insurgent groups were operating in the Federally Administered Tribal Agencies and Baluchistan: the Afghan Taliban; the Pakistani Taliban from both parts of Waziristan; Al Qaeda; the Haqqani Tribal Network; Lashkar-e Taiba; and Hekmatyar's HiG. Baluchi nationalists were also active, but they generally kept themselves

separate from more radically fundamentalist groups. At some point there was a meeting of minds between all of them. One perception from those analyzing the situation was that Al Qaeda was orchestrating policy behind the scenes. To get the Pakistan government to reduce the pressure they were applying in the Federally Administered Tribal Agencies, a deal was struck with a Saudi-backed, Islamabad-based radical party called Lal Masjid (Red Mosque). Lal Masjid launched a campaign of street agitation in the Pakistani capital, and the security forces responded with a brutal crackdown. Those events, aggravated by extremist information operations, led the Pakistanis to question Pakistani government legitimacy in key sectors and particularly the legal system.[4]

Effects included the extension of the radical conservative Islamic agenda far beyond the insurgent base areas in FATA. The crackdown also activated political grievances in other sectors that had remained dormant in Pakistan long before the 9-11 attacks. By the summer and fall of 2007, the Musharraf government in Pakistan was beset by insurgencies in FATA, specifically North and South Waziristan; three other smaller agencies in FATA that abutted Afghanistan; a suicide terrorism campaign directed against the government and military leaders; and massive political agitation in the capital. The main beneficiary of this activity was Al Qaeda:

> There is little doubt today that the survival of the Taliban sanctuary in the FATA (to include the Talibanization of the wider area more generally) has been singularly responsible for the continuing regeneration of Al-Qaeda as an organization because it has permitted the leadership and the operatives of this terrorist group who are relatively small in number to safely "dissolve" into a larger geosocial environment that is either hospitable to them directly or protects them by disguising their presence amid a larger pool of Taliban adherents.[5]

The Musharraf government was also increasingly concerned about insurgent violence that was growing in the Swat Valley, northwest of the capital. Consequently, Pakistani security forces launched Operation JUST PATH to destabilize what looked like a Pakistani Taliban thrust towards Islamabad. It was a success and the insurgents were forced back into the hills by December.[6]

The 2007 political crisis in Pakistan led to calls for an election to establish legitimacy. During that campaign, Benazir Bhutto, the lead candidate for president, was assassinated on 27 December 2007. The culprit was believed to be Baitullah Mehsud, the leader of the Pakistani Taliban in South Waziristan. The Pakistani Taliban groups then publicly united to form the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Pakistan descended into unmitigated violence.[7] These events led Western media to speculate about the security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal in the event of a fundamentalist takeover.[8]

Meanwhile, the Afghan Taliban operated unmolested out of Quetta. It appeared as though that the only similarities between the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani Taliban were that they were both predominantly Pashtun and they both employed the same Khmer Rouge-like methodologies to accomplish their objectives.[9] The major difference was that the Afghan Taliban were much more intertwined with the ISI than the Pakistani Taliban were, and thus in theory easier to control. And, by pointing them in the direction of southern Afghanistan, the Afghan Taliban were less likely to become drawn into anti-government activities alongside the TTP. Indeed, according to one study, the ISI had personnel that were Quetta Shura members, and they had significant influence over certain primary members of the shura.[10]

The other reason for maintaining this relationship with the insurgency was the long-standing Pakistani policy of retaining a means to influence Afghanistan to prevent it from being used as an Indian proxy in a two-front war. Several disparate commentators' analyses converged to this conclusion:

> The Pakistanis left the Afghan Taliban alone, not only because they saw a possible future role for them in Afghanistan, but also because they did not want to risk the consequences of their defeat. If the Afghan Taliban were to suddenly pass from the scene, the United States would almost certainly withdraw from Afghanistan, leaving India as the dominant outside power …[11]

Another observer agreed:

> Musharraf policy was largely aimed at maintaining Pakistan's capabilities for implementing its pre-2001 policies – including the proxy war in Afghanistan – while waiting out the U.S. and coalition military departure from the region…. Pakistan aimed to maintain ISI leverage over the Afghan Taliban and other radical Afghan and Pakistani factions now rebuilding … to the Pakistan military the U.S. 2005 decision to turn the security of southern Afghanistan over to NATO was seen in Pakistan as leading to imminent U.S. disengagement, leaving a vacuum in Afghanistan that if Pakistan did not fill, its rivals – India, Iran – certainly would.[12]

And:

> The Taliban/ISI relationship is founded on mutual benefit. The Taliban need external sanctuary, as well as military and logistical support to sustain their insurgency; the ISI believes that it needs a significant allied force in Afghanistan to maintain regional strength and strategic depth in their rivalry with India …[13]

Friction between India and Pakistan arose largely from competition over Kashmir, a problem dating back to Partition in 1947 when the new state of Pakistan began using Islamic terrorism as a strategic tool. The Mumbai attack of 26 November 2008, for example, was conducted while the international community was working to improve relations between India and Pakistan.

The role of Al Qaeda remains important, but tends to be obscured by the *sturm und drang* of Pakistani internecine violence. It was not as simple as Osama bin Laden issuing orders to subordinate allies in the TTP or HiG. Some form of consensus mechanism like an insurgent shura was probably used to convince other groups to conduct operations that mutually supported Al Qaeda and their allies' objectives. Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri probably had Pakistan and its nuclear arsenal as their ultimate objectives. Indeed, they both believed that the Pakistani weapons "belonged" to the *ummah*.[14]

Meanwhile, the insurgent "syndicate", as ISAF intelligence personnel and commanders called it, continued planning the removal of the ISAF "shield" protecting Afghanistan. Throughout 2008, one aspect of that campaign was an increase of pressure on coalition supply lines passing through Pakistan. In January of that year, a variety of insurgent groups began intimidating civilian truckers and warehouse workers, and striking targets in Peshawar and Karachi.[15]

What may have started out as an insurgent strategy to interdict ISAF in Afghanistan generated unintended consequences for all parties to the conflict. Recall that the Taliban, as a group, was created by the ISI and supported by Quetta-based Pashtun trucking mafias to keep Highway 4 open for regional trade, and was therefore a tool of Pakistani state policy. This led to antagonism between the trucking mafias, which sought to profit from supporting ISAF from Karachi to Kandahar, and the other insurgent entities, who wanted to squeeze ISAF.

As with most things in this region, a deal, or variety of deals, was struck between interested parties. As one observer noted:

> Karachi is the Sea Port of Debarkation for Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. The place where they unload the boat … 472 miles of bad road, shake-down, extortion, break-down and delay. The drivers get jacked around at Karachi by Pakistani customs, the Pakistani version of the Teamsters, the trucking company they contracted with, and all the various trolls setting up road blocks for the collection of protection money, and then they get to sit in the parking lot at Chaman waiting to cross over to Spin Boldak. Things go boom in the night in that parking lot.[16]

Insurgents based in Pakistan quickly realized that this state of affairs could also benefit them. By 2009, private security companies paid Taliban groups not to attack the supply convoys they escorted; incidentally, one of these companies, Watan Risk Management, was controlled by Ahmad Wali Karzai. As one study noted, "Many firefights are really just negotiations over the fee." One estimate concluded that such payoffs put at least one million and up to two million dollars per week into insurgent coffers. One observer noted that "the Taliban and the local warlords typically take between 10-20% of the value of any project as the price to provide protection. The United States and international community are unintentionally fueling a vast political economy of security corruption in Afghanistan".[17]

The mind-bending situation whereby ISAF was in part funding the insurgency that it was fighting, while its ally's intelligence service influenced that insurgency for its purposes, surely must be one of the most bizarre and convoluted aspects of the war in Afghanistan.

During the political chaos of early 2008, TTP suicide attacks resulted in the deaths of more than 600 people. By February of that year, intelligence analysts concluded that "[t]he militants continue to control the agenda" and that the Pakistani Army's "currently limited strategy is one of containment instead of pro-active engagement … they are renewing negotiations [with Mehsud] … we are seeing signs that militants are moving back into Afghanistan ahead of the annual spring offensive".[18] There was also the Pakistan Government's decision to postpone Madrassa reform until after the next election.[19] That meant that there were more indoctrinated young men available for exploitation by the insurgents. Both items had a direct impact on Canadian operations in Kandahar.

The continuing negotiation over the status of Waziristan was another problem. Pakistani politicians, grasping for a solution, wanted assurances that South Waziristan would not become a base of operations against Afghanistan. The ISI leadership directly interfered and confronted one of the politicians on the issue. He concluded that "ISI is trying to make peace for Pakistan at the expense of events in Afghanistan".[20]

The political instability in Pakistan brought on by the uncertain elections and high levels of violence generated concern in American circles over the security and safety of Pakistani nuclear weapons. The Pakistani military leadership continuously asserted that this was not an issue, though American observers reported that senior Pakistani leaders told them that the personnel reliability program, which was only two years old, was being resisted by personnel "who felt their patriotism was being questioned".[21]

American concerns were heightened when the TTP stepped up operations into the Swat Valley, a resort district northwest of Islamabad. Operation LION HEART, the Pakistani response to the Swat incursion, was launched in August 2008 but encountered significant opposition. While LION HEART ground on, a cross-border raid by American special

operations forces into South Waziristan against insurgent leadership targets in September 2008 did not go as expected and was compromised. The result was substantial backlash against the Pakistani government from all quarters within Pakistan. The fallout severely damaged already fragile US-Pakistan relations and had an impact on the ISAF resupply problem.[22]

By November, violence in the FATA and NWFP agencies was at an all-time high and these areas now experienced "Talibanization": the violent imposition of sharia law, the targeting and destruction of secular institutions, and massive human rights violations. The Pakistani military leadership's message to the United States was, "[PAKMIL] could not go ahead with military operations against militants ahead of support from the new civilian leadership because they needed civilian ownership of the battle against extremism".[23] At the same time, the Pakistani military leaders made cosmetic modifications to the ISI but took no real steps to influence the Afghan Taliban in their operations in southern Afghanistan. It was as if the Pakistani military establishment had decided to respond to the September cross-border action by backing off and settling into a holding pattern.[24]

Meanwhile, substantial diplomatic efforts were under way to improve the peace agreement between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. No one had any illusions that this 60-year-old problem could be solved overnight, but the movement to reduce tension between the two countries was deemed by some to permit the application of more Pakistani troops to western Pakistan, rather than having them wait and deter the Indian attack that was not coming.

The terrorist attack of 26 November 2008 in Mumbai, which killed more than 160 people and wounded more than 300, was a game-changer of seismic proportions. The attacking organization, Lashkar-e-Taiba, was an ISI-supported proxy terrorist force used in Kashmir against Indian security forces. President Zardari of Pakistan

> … is convinced the Mumbai attacks were designed to both undermine his proposals to extent (sic) rapprochement with India and convince Pakistan to weaken its commitment to fighting militants in FATA by reinforcing the Pakistan military's focus on the Indian threat. While the transfer of 5,000-7,000 Pakistani Army troops to the Indian border was largely token, it demonstrated the Army's need to respond to its existential enemy.[25]

Recall in Volume I that terrorist attacks against the Indian Parliament in the summer of 2002 by Pakistan-supported groups that were linked to a variety of radical Islamist entities led to an escalation of tension deemed by some to be a path to nuclear war. That incident led to the withdrawal of Pakistani troops from Western Pakistan, which

decreased border coverage and permitted Al Qaeda, Taliban and associated allied forces to escape Afghanistan. The events of 2008 were almost a replay of events seven years later. Tension between India and Pakistan led to a slackening of Pakistani pressure on the insurgents in the FATA agencies. The actions also led to preparations for the evacuation of nuclear material in Pakistan by the United States.[26]

In early 2009, the Pakistani government admitted that insurgent groups controlled both Waziristan and the Swat Valley.[27] The Frontier Corps kept the Khyber Agency open and the supply trucks rolled into Afghanistan, but at a price; that money went to support insurgents in the Federally Administered Tribal Agencies. The Afghan Taliban could only observe the situation with some amusement and continue their operations against ISAF in southern Afghanistan with renewed support from within Pakistan.

The Pakistani security forces focused on the Swat Valley in early 2009. Swat's geographical proximity to the capital in Islamabad made this an obvious choice, but apparently there were indications that Baitullah Mehsud and Mullah Omar made an agreement to shift the resources of both organizations against ISAF forces in Afghanistan once they consolidated their position in FATA.[28] In May Pakistani security forces, including three divisions and five special forces battalions, went in to re-take the province in a high-profile operation. This operation went on for two months before Swat was declared secure. Collateral effects included the successful targeting of Pakistani Taliban leader Batiullah Mehsud by a UAV strike on 4 August. The follow-on operation after Swat was Operation PATH OF SALVATION in South Waziristan in October in which three Pakistani Army divisions and several special forces battalions were deployed.[29]

On the surface it appears as though the dual offensives had a substantial effect on reducing insurgent operations in FATA. North Waziristan and adjacent agencies, however, remained "uncracked." A dissenting opinion suggests that the situation was far more complex than reported in diplomatic circles and may have had an impact on Afghan Taliban operations in southern Afghanistan in 2009.

According to this view there were essentially four players in the drama: Al Qaeda, the TTP (Pakistani Taliban), the Afghan Taliban led by Mullah Omar, and formal and informal elements of the ISI. Al Qaeda's objective was to maintain the momentum of the TTP and its allies inside Pakistan with an eye to destabilizing the Zardari government and generating open revolt in Pakistan's largest cities (the Karachi mayor alerted American agencies to this problem in April 2009).[30] The Mehsud-less TTP was now susceptible to suggestion, and the Al Qaeda leadership now suggested that it work more closely with Mullah Omar's Afghan Taliban against ISAF in Afghanistan. Those in the Pakistani security

forces that viewed the Afghan Taliban as their proxy force looked at this situation with some alarm and believed that Al Qaeda and the TTP would take over the Afghan Taliban and then use it against Pakistan.[31] This extremely convoluted state of affairs likely led to uncertainly within the Quetta Shura and the detainment of certain leaders, including Mullah Baradar, in early 2010.

American observers produced a cogent assessment of the situation in Pakistan in late 2009.

> [The embassy] believes that it is not/not possible to counter Al Qaeda in Pakistan absent a comprehensive strategy that 1) addresses the interlinked Taliban threat in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2) brings about stable civilian government in Afghanistan, and 3) re-examines the broader role of India and the region … [T]he ending of Pakistani establishment support to terrorist and extremist groups, some Afghan-focused and some India-focused, is the key element for success.[32]

Al Qaeda was only able to operate in FATA because the Taliban operated there, so targeting leaders was useful but not a full solution. The only way to get at Al Qaeda was to strip away its Pakistani Taliban shield, and the only way to do that was to "extend the writ of the Pakistani state into the FATA … We should be under no illusion, however, that this effort will require a multi-year, multi-agency effort." Most importantly,

> Taliban groups in Pakistan and the regional threat posed by Al-Qaeda, however, cannot be effectively dealt with absent a broader regional strategy that leads to stability in Afghanistan. Fear that the ISAF mission in Afghanistan will end without the establishment of a non- Taliban, [Pashtun]-led government friendly to Pakistan adds to the Pakistani establishment's determination not to cut its ties irrevocably to the Afghan Taliban. They fear that withdrawals of NATO countries on a certain date in Afghanistan is only the thin edge of the wedge that will be followed by other coalition partners, including the United States … General Kayani has been utterly frank about Pakistan's position on this. In such a scenario, the Pakistani establishment will dramatically increase support for Taliban groups in Pakistan and Afghanistan, which they see either as ultimately likely to take over the Afghan government or at least an important counter-weight to an Indian-controlled Northern Alliance.[33]

This threat by the head of the Pakistani Army, made to American diplomats in 2009, is nothing short of astounding. If NATO forces tried to withdraw from Afghanistan, the Pakistani military establishment threatened to increase support to the insurgency against them to get them to stay in Afghanistan in order to prevent a security vacuum that Pakistan pathologically feared would be filled either by their long-standing antagonist India or, possibly, Shi'a Iran. At the time, the only ISAF country that was both publicly committed to withdrawal from Afghanistan, and seriously engaged with Afghan Taliban forces, was Canada.

The degree of ISI complicity in Afghan Taliban operations was more and more obvious from 2009 on. Field interviews with current and former Afghan Taliban mid-level leaders conducted in 2009 and 2010 by a human rights think-tank revealed the following pertinent points:[34]

1. the ISI was represented in the Quetta Shura;

2. mid-level leaders were "afraid that if they say anything against the Taliban or ISI it would be reported to higher ranks — and they may be removed or assassinated";

3. attempts to negotiate a peace deal between Afghanistan and the Afghan Taliban "could only take place if the ISI had a major role in, if not control over, the negotiating process";

4. many fighters were conducting operations while "under duress" by the ISI; and

5. the destruction of schools and the assassination campaign against religious institutions and moderate religious figures in southern Afghanistan were elements of an ISI strategy to eliminate competition from moderate variants of Islam.

A Taliban commander interviewed for the study pointedly stated, "If anyone rejects that the ISI backs or controls the Taliban, he has a mental problem … all our plans and strategy are made in Pakistan and step by step it is brought to us …"[35] The most shocking allegation was that President Zardari himself condoned employment of the Afghan Taliban as a Pakistani strategic tool, and allegedly told detained senior Afghan Taliban leaders that the detentions were cosmetic in order to get the Americans off Pakistan's back on the Taliban issue.[36]

Long-time regional observer David C. Isby starkly noted:

> Both military and civilian governments in Pakistan, at the end of the day, have relied on the ISI. While the degree and extent of ISI operations in support of Afghan insurgents remains uncertain, it is not a "rogue" operation' or a "state within a state", two clichés frequently encountered in Western reporting. The ISI has operational freedom and independence to implement policies within broad guidance, but it remains under military control … The ISI will not act against the interest of Pakistan's military.[37]

At the same time, paradoxically, the Pakistani Taliban unleashed a massive wave of urban terrorism that included bombing ISI Headquarters and, in October 2009, a daring attack on Pakistan Army Headquarters by insurgents dressed as soldiers. Observers noted the emergence of a completely new breed of insurgent: the Punjabi Taliban. By 2010, some wondered if Pakistan was becoming a new Algeria.[38]

American diplomat John R. Schmidt concluded:

> The fact that the Pakistanis felt compelled to act in such a duplicitous manner reflected the importance they attached to the future makeup of Afghanistan. They did not want to abandon their relationship with the United States, but were unwilling to accept the consequences of an Afghan Taliban defeat … "To hunt with the hounds and run with the hare" is one of the most popular Pakistani aphorisms.[39]

Canadian observation of the scene in Pakistan took several forms. First, there was a Defence Attaché deployed in Islamabad. In 2008, as MGen Marc Lessard's headquarters team at Regional Command (South) became concerned about border operations and the growing threat to the logistics line of communications, attaché LCol Brian Douglas assumed the second hat of Regional Command (South) Liaison Officer to the armed forces of Pakistan (PAKMIL).[40]

The nature of the Spin Boldak border problem in 2008 resulted in the formal appointment of LCol Ted Middleton to provide liaison between Regional Command (South) and PAKMIL from KAF and Spin Boldak. He developed a system of joint border conferences designed to get the local and regional leaders of the Afghan security forces to meet regularly with their Pakistani counterparts.[41]

As the situation in Pakistan deteriorated, ISAF attempted to develop closer links with both the Afghans and the Pakistanis through a Tripartite Commission that brought the military leaders of the three entities together. In time, the Regional Commands established connections to two Pakistani Army corps based in provinces of Pakistan bordering on Afghanistan. Task Force Kandahar under BGen Jonathan Vance also established a relationship with the 3rd Pishin Scouts, the Frontier Corps battalion operating across the border from Spin Boldak in Chaman. In late 2009, a Border Coordination Centre opened in Spin Boldak.[42]

Finally, the Canadian Army contributed to the American-run Office of the Defense Representative Pakistan, founded during the Cold War to provide material assistance to Pakistan and heavily augmented after 9/11.[43] LCol Middleton's successor, LCol Kevin Ng, observed that the NATO ISAF liaison with PAKMIL was only intermittently effective, as it was conducted at a low level and did not connect with other mechanisms, while the Pakistani system had full continuity. LCol Ng sought to place a NATO ISAF liaison officer in the ODRP to exploit the bilateral relationship already established there between the United States and Pakistan. In 2010, LCol Ng was replaced by LCol Craig Braddon.[44]

Led by an American three-star general-level officer, ODRP had many functions. There was the Defense Attaché Office, a Security Assistance Office, and a Special Operations Command (Forward) Pakistan organization, plus force protection for the various officers and staff. Most of these activities were related to training and equipping Pakistani forces in various ways. ODRP also retained liaison with 11 Corps and 12 Corps of the Pakistan Army. Each of these corps was located opposite RC (East) and RC (South) respectively. Over time an ISAF Coordination Element Pakistan was set up that included liaison officers to those organizations but embedded inside ODRP. The multinational team consisted of American, British, and Canadian officers, with the Canadians ensconced in the LNO Cell.[45]

The ICEPAK, as it was called, was formally designated to coordinate ISAF activities with those of the Frontier Corps (NWFP) and Frontier Corps (Baluchistan); the PAKMIL General Headquarters; and by default 11 and 12 Corps through the Americans at ODRP. These activities consisted of representing ISAF interests at more than six different coordination meetings with PAKMIL, handling the Border Flag Meetings between the Afghan and Pakistan security forces in the border regions; and providing situational awareness on events in Pakistan to ISAF and CENTCOM.[46]

Coordination and cooperation were uneven. Regional Command (East) had the most activity with its counterparts in the NWFP than RC (South) did with Baluchistan. In the south, the Pakistani security forces wanted ISAF to suppress what it said were Baluch seperatists operating against Pakistan from Afghanistan. ISAF could not detect significant Baluch insurgent activity so the Pakistani authorities used this as an excuse to engage in non-cooperation vis-à-vis the Afghan Taliban operating in Quetta.[47]

The reality of the situation was not concealed within ODRP. Indeed, Canadian officers were repeatedly told that "We [ODRP] are here to make it harder for the enemy to kill us in Afghanistan, not to be friends with Pakistan." Unfortunately, a steady series of incidents undermined almost all attempts at coordination and liaison from 2009 to 2010. The killing of Frontier Corps personnel in an airstrike on the border was one. Wikileaks and its frank State Department cable traffic on Pakistan was another. President Obama's India visit was a third, while an American involved in covert activity in Pakistan was apprehended and jailed after shooting men attempting to kidnap him. Ultimately, in May 2011 Operation NEPTUNE SPEAR effectively attenuated almost all liaison activity until Canada withdrew from the south.[48]

LCol Craig Braddon noted that he and his American and British colleagues regularly debated whether Pakistan was "a misunderstood, misguided and incompetent ally, but an ally nonetheless" or "a wily and dangerous foe". They concluded that "they are both … and they can be both in the same sentence without breaking a sweat."[49]

The effectiveness of the Canadian Army's engagement with the Pakistani security forces was debatable. There was no criteria for success, no measurements of effectiveness established, and the engagement was not formerly linked to any other Canadian activity that was ongoing in Pakistan: DFAIT and CIDA were spending money on various projects but there appeared to be no coordinated Canadian approach. There was an argument to be made that connectivity at the strategic and operational levels themselves made the engagement a success. It was better to talk and gain information than not talk, even if very little was accomplished on the ground. There was no real success at the tactical level.[50]

In stark, fundamental terms, Canadian troops were killed and maimed by Afghan Taliban supported by the Pakistani establishment. In order to achieve their strategic aims, the Pakistani establishment were fighting at least three groups allied to the Afghan Taliban, including Al Qaeda, on its soil. This state of affairs existed while the Pakistani establishment lost ground to threats posed by new fundamentalist organizations, like the Punjabi Taliban. The very real possibility that Pakistan might succumb to multiple internal threats did not diminish their support for the Afghan Taliban insurgency, while the fearful delusion of an Indian-controlled Afghanistan continued to hold sway. That state of affairs, especially one backed up with nuclear weapons, placed absolute limits on even superpower influence.

ENDNOTES

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APPENDIX C:

THE KABUL 100 AND THEIR SUCCESSORS

In 2005, when Task Force Afghanistan packed up and moved from Kabul to Kandahar (covered in Volume I), about 100 Canadians remained in Kabul to serve in headquarters and advisory appointments.

An important aspect of Canadian operations in Afghanistan was the maintenance of staff officers at the various coalition headquarters to protect Canada's interests and prevent misuse of Canadian resources by larger allies. This practice dates from the Canadian Army's first NATO deployments during the 1950s, when generals who remembered Hong Kong and Dieppe took steps to ensure that Canadians would be in position at least to provide insight into coalition decision-making processes and to influence decisions.

Like the members of the Strategic Advisory Team–Afghanistan (SAT-A), the Canadian officers at ISAF HQ and the various American headquarters under Combined Forces Command–Afghanistan (later U.S. Forces Afghanistan) observed and influenced events where possible. The effects of their actions, decisions and activities, while not necessarily quantifiable, were important to the overall conduct of the war in Kabul, with attendant effects on the war in Kandahar from a Canadian perspective.

As in any higher headquarters, Kabul's version of reality tended to vary from the tactical-level understanding to be had in Kandahar Province. Indeed, the outlook of some Kabul-based Canadian officers differed substantially from that of the staff at TF Kandahar headquarters, just as it differed in its perspective on events from Regional Command (South). Canadian officers in those positions could see Canada's involvement in Afghanistan from a national (i.e., Afghan) and in some cases a regional (coalition or global) context. Some were overwhelmed by the magnitude of the effort put into the war by other countries compared to the Canadian effort and could not see how Canada could possibly wield influence. Others had no issue with this and could see how the tactical level in Kandahar, the operational level in Regional Command (South) and the strategic level (Kabul) were all linked, and that their role was to try to be as holistic with the other organizations as possible in support of Canadian objectives.

Almost all members routinely endured internecine and national headquarters drama in one form or another. Was a Canadian serving at ISAF HQ a NATO person, or a representative of Canada? Should coalition requirements trump Canadian objectives and aims? What happened if Canadian policy clashed with, say, American policy in the halls of Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan? How did a staff officer cope with such ambiguity, in addition to isolation from the Canadian task force and distance from home?

The pressures of this kind of existence were substantial. In effect, Canadian headquarters staff in Kabul were in small, comfortable prisons from which they sortied periodically for leave or staff meetings at other headquarters. Not all were equipped to deal with the pressures of headquarters compound life in a hostile city in a country at war. Maj Ray Ruckpaul committed suicide at ISAF HQ on 29 August 2007, and Maj Michelle Mendes killed herself at Kandahar Air Field on 23 April 2009. They were casualties of war.

As well as in the headquarters organizations, Canadians were deployed with several smaller initiatives in Kabul. A small team served at the Afghan National Army's NCO Academy; the training cadre of the Junior Officers' Staff Course included a single Canadian; a handful worked at the Second Language Training Centre Afghanistan; and one Canadian senior officer served with UNAMA.[1]

Structurally, there were the 'Kabul 100' staff officers and the National Command Element Kabul which was under the command of JTF-A HQ at Kandahar Air Field. NCE Kabul was logistically supported through a National Support Element detachment and signals detachment. In some cases these personnel rotated with others from units in Kandahar, and in some cases they were kept permanently in Kabul depending on the rotation. The drawdown of British operations in Kabul made space available at Camp Souter near the Kandahar International Airport, so arrangements were made to base the supporting Canadian elements there in a collection of Weatherhavens.[2]

NCE Kabul Force Protection consisted of several close protection parties equipped with armoured SUVs. These soldiers carried out the hazardous task of transporting Canadian personnel through the urban jungle of the Kabul highway system. They were exceptionally adept at this job and were exceedingly knowledgeable about the layout of the city and how to get around safely and expediently. The NCE close protection team were also plugged in to the British forces at Camp Souter, particularly their counterparts in close protection and the intelligence systems, and maintained a quick reaction capability for local incidents involving Canadian personnel.[3]

All Canadian soldiers moving around Kabul during these years, be they the staff officers in the headquarters, signallers, logisticians, or close protection, were subject to potential IED attack on a daily basis. The threat level was usually designated as "high" and there were numerous occasions where the insurgency used Kabul as a stage for terrorist theatre with the international media as the audience. CSTC-A headquarters was attacked in early 2009 with a fuel truck bomb, for example. In many ways Kabul had the potential to be as dangerous as Kandahar City and it is only a combination of professionalism and fate that kept Canadian casualties low in the Afghan capital. The unfortunate exception to this was the death of Col Geoff Parker on 18 May 2010. Col Parker, part of an incoming American-Canadian regional command headquarters conducting a strategic recce, was killed by a large IED in an attack on his convoy.

ENDNOTES

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2. Briefing to the author (Kabul, 6 March 2009).
3. The author was the recipient of their services on more than one occasion.

APPENDIX D:

KANDAHAR AIR FIELD

As we have seen in Volume I, Kandahar Air Field or 'KAF' was vital ground. And, as we also saw in Volume I, the deployment of forces from Task Force Kabul to KAF and the subsequent stand-up of Task Force Afghanistan in 2005 led to Canadian occupation of space in KAF. The Canadian headquarters compound initially consisted of a collection of Weatherhavens across from the remaining battered hanger, and kitty-corner to a structure dubbed "The Taliban's Last Stand" or TLS. The rabbit warrens of the TLS eventually became the headquarters for the airfield, while the 1960s-era terminal two kilometers down the road was refurbished for civilian use. TF Kandahar Headquarters was also across the road from Regional Command (South) Headquarters. Canadian accommodation initially was in the west end of the base and consisted of more Weatherhavens clustered around Canada House, the morale and welfare facility.

KAF was a home-away-from-home for more than 1,300 Canadians, including at least 1,000 military personnel and some 300 civilians. By 2007, the accommodation area shifted to a collection of stacked modular ISO structures in the east end of the base near the battle group headquarters compound. New Canada House and the Canadian Gym, constructed in 2008, led to the progressive abandonment of the Old Canada House accommodation area. The Canadian Personnel Support Agency had its facilities in the new area as well.

The TF Kandahar Headquarters Compound expanded over the years with ISO buildings replacing the Weatherhavens and trailers. The Provincial Operations Centre (POC) was established in early 2007 in the TF Kandahar HQ compound. The National Support Element and the Sperwer TUAV unit were located in large compounds in the southwest corner of KAF.

Initially KAF was an American-controlled facility but by August 2007 it transitioned to a NATO command called Commander Kandahar Air Field or COMKAF. The importance of Kandahar Air Field as the NATO logistics and command node in southern Afghanistan requires no elaboration here. Kandahar Air Field expanded geometrically over the years and went from a burnt out forward operating base in 2003 to a small city of nearly 20,000 inhabitants by 2011. In many ways KAF was similar to a western Canadian frontier town from the 1800s: everything was temporary, including all of the life support systems: water, fuel, sewage, and power. Its inhabitants were, for the most part, transitory. Kandahar Air Field, however, became much more than a place to land and offload aircraft.

Kandahar Air Field was a sort of land chess game between the NATO countries based there. Space was at a premium and there was a significant amount of jockeying for ramp space, accommodation, and access to amenities. This jockeying played itself out in NATO political circles when it could not be resolved locally, which had an impact in operations. There was only so much ramp space and possession, as it was on the frontier, was nine-tenths of the law. Similarly there was accommodation space. And, as in any real estate market, it was a matter of "Location, location, location." Canadian personnel were adroit at getting what they wanted.

Afghan law did not appear to apply to Kandahar Air Field except that elements of the Barakzai power structure gobbled up adjacent land from its owners to rent to NATO and/or the Afghan government. To what extent the grievances generated by these processes led to attacks against Kandahar Air Field remains speculative but for old hands it was a likely proposition.

Indeed, KAF developed its own "sheriff" in the form of a multi-national military police unit led by the Danes. Canada and her allies did not count on, nor did they initially assign forces for policing a multi-national city that grew from 10,000 to 20,000 people. As KAF grew, so did the crime rate. This included criminal activities that would have infected any frontier town: illicit stimulants, prostitution, and black market activity. KAF was no exception. There were stills for making vodka from potatoes in one contingent's area, while another contingent possessed a jerry-built hot tub that had to be closed by preventative medical technicians. One could also add illegal immigration. By 2010 there were several hundred workers from Asian countries who were abandoned at Kandahar Air Field when their contracted employers went belly up and walked away. The black market trade in meal cards for the dining facilities was particularly brisk.[1]

Kandahar Air Field's expansion had a significant impact on the local economy as hundreds, and later thousands, of Afghans were employed in some aspect of its operations. It is unclear how intentional this was in later days, but employment at Kandahar Air Field could be seen as a "cash for work" project on a grand scale. Kandahar Air Field was the ultimate development project. This applied particularly to those Afghan companies who supplied concrete blast barriers to mitigate the effects of rocket attacks against the sprawling facility.

The importance of Kandahar Air Field to civil aviation was understood by the Barakzai power structure as early as 2002-2003. The Sherzai clan took the field in 2002 with American SOF and retained control of it with a variety of militia forces loyal to them for years afterwards. Governor Gul Agha Sherzai and his brother Rezik were the first to push development agencies to refurbish the civilian terminal area and by 2008 this area was segregated from the military side of Kandahar Air Field to facilitate civilian air travel.

This had significant religious implications because of the ongoing demand for Hajj flights by the population. In also was necessary for the narcotics producers, who needed to move their product out by air to avoid additional costs incurred by ground routing through Pakistan or the northern 'Stans'.

The evolution of Kandahar Air Field defence measures was significant and proportional to the geometric expansion of the base. As we will recall, a Romanian battalion replaced the Canadian battle group in the Kandahar Air Field protection role in 2002 and they continued with this role until 2006. There were three primary mechanisms for Kandahar Air Field protection. The first of these was the Joint Defence Operations Centre or JDOC. This was the central headquarters for ground defence located at the TLS. The JDOC also controlled the alert sirens and the nearly-incomprehensible Big Voice loudspeaker alert system (in time the system was automated so that radar acquisition of a launched rocket produced a pre-recorded British-accented female voice calmly announcing, "Rocket Attack. Rocket Attack." Usually this occurred after the rocket had already impacted.

The second were the Entry Control Points or ECPs that were manned by a variety of nations whose troops searched all civilian vehicles and personnel entering KAF. These ECPs were vital to prevent the introduction of suicide bombers and other engines of nastiness into the camp. Initially Canada manned one of the ECPs, which took a platoon off-line from fighting west of the city or from protecting convoys. As more European nations were cajoled into sending forces to southern Afghanistan, Hungary and Bulgaria deployed small contingents to assist with KAF security starting in 2006-2007. The Bulgarians replaced the Romanian battalion who departed for Zabol Province in 2007 to get into the fight there. Canadian National Support Element commanders kept up the pressure to release their force protection platoon from ECP duty but it took years to accomplish this.

Outside of the Entry Control Points lay the Ground Defence Area or GDA, which extended several kilometers and included parts of Daman district to eventually include a total of 450 square kilometers of ground. Starting in 2006, the GDA was the responsibility of an RAF Regiment field squadron, which rotated every six months. A field squadron consisted of an infantry company of three flights mounted in semi-armoured Land Rovers plus mortars and sniper teams. Elements of a RAF Force Protection Wing also deployed, which included Military Police, a Tower Company, and a radar unit. Canadian units supported British efforts in this area in numerous ways from sharing intelligence to providing counter-IED and mobile recovery teams when RAF patrols got bogged or were IED'd.[2]

Canadian PSYOPS worked with British PSYOPS in Daman District from time to time, but the RAF Regiment field squadron never managed to coordinate CIMIC activity in the GDA with the Provincial Reconstruction Team. (Considered relatively secure, Daman was unofficially recognized as Barakzai territory controlled by the Sherzais, whose militia

was based there.) The field squadron routinely received information from the Canadian UAVs, and one of the Sperwer TUAVs would be dedicated to KAF Force Protection when no MQ-1 Predators were available.[3]

This leads us to a discussion of enemy activity and Kandahar Air Field. Enemy action against Kandahar Air Field took three forms. First, and best known, were the rockets attacks. Second, as time went on, there were small ground assaults against the facility. Third, there was enemy parasitical logistics activity conducted within the confines of the base itself.

Countering rocket attacks absorbed substantial resources. In a general sense, there appeared to be two entities engaged in firing free-flight rockets against Kandahar Air Field. The first could be characterized as insurgent indirect fire against a logistics node, while the second could be classified as commercial activity. In some cases it is likely both entities who were engaged in rocketeering overlapped when it was convenient. U.S. diplomat Peter Tomsen noted that, in 1989, Gul Agha Sherzai collaborated with a corrupt Communist Kandahar governor

> … to stage fake "attacks" … on the American-built Kandahar Airport southeast of the city. At the appointed time, for the benefit of ISI agents observing the operation, Gul Agha's Mujahidin harmlessly fired off rockets and light weapons near the airport. Along the runways, Ulumi's troops set oil drums on fire and made loud noises. In return, Ulumi allowed Gul Agha to sell ISI-provided American wheat inside Kandahar City in return for keeping the peace. Gul Agha pocketed the profits. He submitted voucher requests to the ISI for more money and additional ammunition to replenish that expended during the farcical airport operations.[4]

There is no reason to believe that things were any different between 2006 and 2011.

There were two identifiable "rocket boxes": Kvosh Ab and Mandi Sar. The rockets themselves were usually Chinese-made 107mm free-flight rockets. Some came from Iran and others from Pakistan. Some rockets were Iranian but came in through Pakistan. Others were Chinese that came in through Iran. All were launched from crude improvised launchers using rudimentary timing devices. The adjacent Arghistan District was part of a 'rat line' extending back through Maruf District and then to Pakistan: the Arghistan Mujahideen had been firing rockets at Kandahar City as far back as 1989 and thus had some experience with the activity.[5] The insurgent rocket team worked the Mandi Sar rocket box, while the commercial entities, believed to be Kutchie nomads, tended to work in the Kvosh Ab rocket box. Rocketeers apparently received $200 per rocket fired at Kandahar Air Field. The people in Mandi Sar were believed to be motivated by Pashtunwali, which was regularly stoked by the Taliban for their purposes. In 2001 a compound was apparently hit during an OEF airstrike killing some local people, and their involvement in rocketeering was considered

to be some form of *badl* payback.[6] There were also land issues in the Mandi Sar area related to Barakzai and Popalzai power brokers, and their commercial activities along Highway 4. Those involved included Colonel Tor Jan at the PRT, who used appropriated land in the area for his car dealership. In other words, there was a tangle of grievances activated by the insurgents for their purposes.

The Taliban extorted protection from wealthy merchants in Quetta in the form of a tithe. Those merchants funded and transported the 107mm rockets to their end users via trucks through Spin Boldak and up Highway 4. This was clever on the part of the Taliban: it implicated otherwise apolitical Quetta businessmen *bazzaris* who used their own resources to support the insurgency in Afghanistan, affording the Taliban and their backers some deniability. It also added yet another category of ambiguity. Were these merchants insurgents or not?[7]

In some cases, it seemed as if the insurgency used rocket attacks against Kandahar Air Field as a signaling tool to let coalition VIP visitors know that they remained in the fight. For example, when the insurgency learned that there were high-level visitors on base, there would be an attack within 24 hours, sometimes less. One of these occurred on 8 May 2009 when multiple attacks were launched while the Prime Minister, the Chief of Defence Staff, and the Chief of the Land Staff were at Kandahar Air Field on a visit. This was assessed by TF Kandahar as "no coincidence."[8] Similarly, the enemy attempted to rocket night-time ramp ceremonies in the hopes of generating mass casualties among the ranks of the hundreds of coalition personnel who turned out to pay their respects to the fallen. This made for surreal dynamics in that soldiers and civilian personnel in ceremonial mass ranks were in some cases subjected to enemy fire on an open field, which was some ways more like a 19th Century battlefield than the 21st Century one twenty kilometers to the west.

The impact of the cumulative damage caused by rocket attacks against Kandahar Air Field was debatable. Did the attacks generate some friction in Kandahar Air Field activities? Yes. Did the rockets kill and maim personnel and destroy some equipment at Kandahar Air Field? Yes: numerous Canadians were wounded by rocket attacks during the course of the war. Were there psychological casualties among the Kandahar Air Field residents? Yes. Did any of this significantly affect combat or development operations in the province? No. The net effect of the rocket attacks, however, was to force COMKAF and the various coalition forces at Kandahar Air Field to purchase substantial numbers of increasingly larger and thicker concrete blast barriers, so much so that each compound on the base looked like a small fortress by 2009. That money went to Kandahar construction companies dominated by the Barakzai and Popalzai power structures, which in turn employed hundreds of their associates. To what extent this distorted the economy in the province and generated new or augmented existing grievances among the non-Popalzai and non-Barakzai populations remains as unclear as it is unexamined.

One perplexing aspect of the KAF Rocket War was the lack of technological or tactical sophistication employed by those engaged in launching the rockets. There was no attempt to acquire a multiple-launch unit, essentially a trailer with a row of tubes mounted on it, and there were hundreds of such derelicts from earlier days. Rockets usually came in one at a time, sometimes in pairs, but there was no stonk of rockets. Though there was a 2006 report that some rockets had white phosphorous warheads, none were ever employed against Kandahar Air Field. In many cases the high explosives on the warheads did not even detonate. It was almost as if some of the rockets were not intended to generate serious damage.

Another perplexing aspect of the war revolved around the inability of the insurgency to acquire and use man-portable anti-aircraft missile systems against coalition aircraft landing or departing Kandahar Air Field. A pair of Chinese-made shoulder-launched HN-5 SAMs were unearthed in a cache east of KAF near Mandi Sar in 2007.[9] There was at least one suspected SAM strike but this was never fully confirmed as the aircraft in question belonged to the covert arm of a NATO-member government. The number of small arms fire incidents against aircraft at KAF was remarkably low and in no way interfered with NATO's ability to logistically sustain its forces in southern Afghanistan through Kandahar Air Field.

Ground assaults against Kandahar Air Field were extremely rare. None of the recorded assaults got past the initial wire fence on the perimeter. One attempt in 2011 was conducted at night by a larger force of insurgents but was stopped in its tracks by a U.S. Air Force AC-130 gunship before it could even approach the perimeter.[10]

Enemy parasitism took several forms. The most subtle consisted of insurgent revenue generation by taxing those merchants selling goods at the weekly bazaar set up in a specially protected compound at Kandahar Air Field. The extent of this is not well documented. The second was the infiltration of agents into the work force to collect intelligence in a traditional sense. A variant of this included the use of infiltrated personnel to act as spotters for rocket attacks and to conduct battle damage assessment afterwards. Third, enemy personnel collected discarded material like batteries and wires from garbage at Kandahar Air Field for IED construction. Indeed, an enemy IED production facility was discovered in a building less than 50 meters away from the Canadian Detainee Transfer Facility.[11] The market was also used as a means to introduce cyber weapons into coalition systems at Kandahar Air Field. For example, a Chinese-made MP3 device sold at the market came equipped with interesting additional features including embedded viruses and trojan horse programs. These programs permitted remote access to computer systems they interacted with.[12]

All in all, Kandahar Air Field was not a rear-area communications zone of the type familiar to students of the Second World War, but a distinct area of operations for both the insurgency and the coalition forces in Kandahar Province.

ENDNOTES

1. TF Kandahar MP Company briefing to the author (KAF, 15 July 2010).
2. RAF Regiment briefing to the author (KAF, 6 June 2007).
3. *Ibid.*
4. Peter Tomsen, *The Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflicts, and the Failures of Great Powers* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), page 334.
5. *Ibid.*, page 333.
6. COMKAF briefing to the author (9 February 2008).
7. Confidential interview.
8. JTF-A HQ DSR (8 May 2009).
9. COMKAF briefing to the author (9 February 2008).
10. The author was present for these events.
11. Confidential interview.
12. TFK INTSUM (5 September 2010).

GLOSSARY

ACP	Access control point
ADATS	Air defence anti-tank system
ADZ	Afghan Development Zone
AEV	Armoured engineer vehicle
AHDS	Afghan Health Delivery Services
AHP	Afghan Highway Police
ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANCOP	Afghan National Civil Order Police
ANDS	Afghan National Development Strategy
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan national security forces, ISAF shorthand for both the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police as a collective.
APC	Armoured personnel carrier
APPP or AP3	Afghan Public Protection Program
APRP	Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program
ARSIC	Afghan Regional Security Integration Commands
ARV	Armoured recovery vehicle
ASIC	All Source Intelligence Centre
ASOP	Afghan Social Outreach Program
AUP	Afghan Uniformed Police

AVIDV	Arghandab Valley Integrated Development Vision
AVLB	Armoured vehicle-launched bridge
AWK	Ahmad Wali Karzai
Bdr	Bombardier
BG	Battle group
BIP	Blow in place
BSC	Battle space commander
C/S	Callsign
CADG	Central Asian Development Group
CANSOFCOM	Canadian Special Operations Forces Command
CCDC	Clustered Community Development Council
CDC	Community Development Council
CEFOM	Canadian Expeditionary Force Command
CER	Combat Engineer Regiment
CEXC	Combined Explosives Exploitation Cell
CF	Canadian Forces
CFC-A	Combined Forces Command–Afghanistan
CFNIS	Canadian Forces National Investigative Service
CGSO	Canadian Government Support Office
CHF	Canadian Helicopter Force
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
C-IED	Counter-IED
CIMIC	Civil-military cooperation

CIVPOL	Civilian Police, or the 30-strong RCMP contingent assigned to the civilian police component of the United Nations Protection Force
CJSOTF	Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force
CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force
CLJ	Constitutional Loya Jirga
CLP	Combat logistics patrol
CMO	Construction Management Organization
CMT	Construction Management Team
CNN	Cable News Network
CO	Commanding Officer
COIN	Counterinsurgency
COP	Combat Outpost
CPEP	Central Poppy Eradication Program
CSOR	Canadian Special Operations Regiment
CSTC-A	Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan
CSYEP	Culturally Structured Youth Employment Program
CTF	Combined Task Force
CTKC	Combined Team Kandahar City
DAFA	Demining Agency for Afghanistan
DAGR	Defence Advanced Global Positioning System (GPS) Receiver, a Canadian GPS system
DCC	District Community Council
DCO	Deputy Commanding Officer
DComd	Deputy Commander
DDA	District Development Assembly
DDCT	Dand District Combat Team

DDD	District Delivery Program
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DEVAD	Development Advisor
DFAIT	Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
DFFC	Directionally focused fragmentation charge
DND	Department of National Defence
DST	District Support Team
EBO	Effects-based operations
ECM	Electronic countermeasures
ECP	Entry control points
ECS	Engineer Construction Squadron
ECT	Engineer Construction Team
EDD	Explosive detection dog team
EOD	Explosive ordnance disposal
EROC	Expedient route-opening capability
ESU	Engineer Support Unit
ETT	Embedded Training Team
Eurocorps	European Corps
EW	Electronic warfare
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Agency
FDD	Focused District Development
FOB	Forward Operating Base
FOO/FAC	Forward observation officer/forward air controller
GBU	Guided bomb unit
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

GMIC	Government Media and Information Centre
GMLRS	Guided multiple-launch rocket system
HALO	Hostile Artillery Locating
HELQUEST	Helicopter Request Message
HESH	High-explosive squash-head (munition)
HFA	Haji Fazluddin Agha
HiG	Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin
HME	Home-made explosive
HQ	Headquarters
HSU	Health Service Unit
HTT	Human Terrain Team
IC	International community
ID	Identification
ICATS	ISAF Contract Air Transport Support
ICEPAK	ISAF Coordination Element Pakistan
IDLG	Independent Directorate for Local Governance
IDP	Internally displaced person
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IED	Improvised explosive device
IFF	Identification friend or foe
IFOR	Implementation Force
IJC	ISAF Joint Command
ILDS	Improved landmine detection system
Int	Intelligence
IO	Information operations

IPAP	Interim Provincial Action Plan
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
ISID	Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate
ISR	Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance
ISTAR	Intelligence, surveillance, target-acquisition and reconnaissance
JAG	Judge Advocate General
JDAMS	Joint direct-attack munition system
JDCC	Joint District Coordination Centre
JECB	Joint Effects Coordinating Board
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JOA	Joint operating area (ISAF)
JOC	Joint Operations Centre
JOG	Joint Operations Group
JP	Joint patrols
JPCC	Joint Provincial Coordination Centre
JPEL	Joint Prioritized Effects List
JTAC	Joint terminal air controller
JTF	Joint Task Force
JTF-A	Joint Task Force–Afghanistan
K-9	Dog team
KAF	Kandahar Air Field
KAP	Kandahar Action Plan
KC	Kandahar City
KCSWG	Kandahar City Security Working Group

KFC	Kandahar Fusion Centre
KIFC	Kandahar Intelligence Fusion Centre
KLE	Key leader engagement
KLIP	Kandahar Local Initiative Program
KMTC	Kabul Military Training Centre
KPRT	Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team
KTD	Key terrain districts
KUS	Kandahar Ulema Shura
KVA	Key Village Approach
KVI	Key Village Insurgent
LAV	Light armoured vehicle
LAW	Light Antitank Weapon
LCMD	Lightweight counter-mine detector
LCMR	Lightweight counter-mortar radar
LeT	Lashkar-e-Taiba
LLD	Light Logistics Detachment
LORIT	LAV Operational Requirements Integration Task
MASCAL	Mass casualty event
MASINT	Measurement and Signature Intelligence
M-ATV	MRAP all-terrain vehicle
MCLC	Mine-clearance line charge (micklick)
MDC	Mine Detection Centre
MEDEVAC	Medical evacuation
MEU	Marine Expeditionary Unit
MEWT	Mobile Electronic Warfare Team

MILAD	Military advisor
MMU	Multinational Medical Unit
MP	Military Police
MPMTT	Military Police Mobile Training Team
MRAP	Mine-resistant ambush-protected (vehicle)
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development
MSO	Municipal Support Office
MTTF	Mission Transition Task Force
MWR	Morale, welfare and recreation
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCCIS	National Command and Control and Information Systems
NDC	New District Centre
NDS	National Directorate of Security
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIS	National Investigative Service
NORSOF	Norwegian Special Operations Forces
NSE	National Support Element
NTM-A	NATO Training Mission–Afghanistan
OCC-D(D)	Operations Coordination Center–District (Dand)
OCC-D(P)	Operational Coordination Centre–District (Panjwayi)
OCC-D	Operational Coordination Center–District
OCC-K	Operational Coordination Center–Kandahar City
OCC-P	Operations Coordination Center–Province (replaced JPCC)
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Operational Detachment Alpha

ODRP	Office of the Defense Representative Pakistan
OEF	Operation ENDURING FREEDOM
OGD	Other government departments
OMLT	Operational Mentor and Liaison Team
OP	Observation post
Op	Operation
OPLAN	Operation Plan
OPORD	Operation order
OPP	Operations planning process
Op tempo	Operational tempo
OPV	Optionally piloted vehicle
OSC-A	Office of Security Cooperation–Afghanistan
PAG	Policy Action Group
PAKMIL	Pakistani military
PB	Patrol Base
PD	Police district
PDC	Provincial Development Committee
PECOC	Panjwayi East Combined Operations Centre
Pfc	Private First Class
PMN	A type of Soviet pressure-activated anti-personnel mine
PMT	Police Mentor Team
POC	Provincial Operations Centre
POLAD	Political Advisor
P-OMLT	Police Operational Mentor and Liaison Team
PPCLI	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry

PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PSS	Persistent surveillance system
PSS	Police sub-station
PSYOPS	Psychological operations
PTDS	Persistent threat-denial system
PTS	Program Takhim-e Sohl
QIP	Quick-Impact Project
QRF	Quick-Reaction Force
RASC	Rapid Accelerated Security Course
RBG(S)	Regional Battle Group (South)
RC	Regional Command
RC (South), RC(S)	NATO ISAF Regional Command (South)
RCIED	Radio-controlled improvised explosive device
RCP	Route-clearance package
RIP	Relief in place
RoCK	Representative of Canada in Kandahar
RPAC	Regional Policing Assistance Command
RPG	Rocket-propelled grenade
RWS	Remote weapons system
SA	Situational awareness
SAT-A	Strategic Advisory Team–Afghanistan
SBPF	Security Belt Protection Force
SBS	Special Boat Squadron
SEAL	Sea, Air and Land, i.e, U.S. Navy special forces operators
SECFOR	OMLT Security Force

SET	Specialist Engineer Team
SFAT	Security Force Advisory Teams
SIGACT	Significant Action
SLTCA	Staff and Language Training Centre Afghanistan
SMA	Sher Mohammad Akhundzada
SNC	SNC-Lavalin Group Inc.
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOIC	Special Operations Intelligence Centre
SOTF	Special Operations Task Force
SRPF	Security Ring Protection Force
STA	Surveillance and target acquisition
Stab	Stabilization
SUAV	Small unmanned aerial vehicle
SVBIED	Suicide vehicle-borne IED
TAA	Tactical assembly area
TACNET	Tactical air control network
TACSAT	Tactical satellite; i.e., a type of crypto-capable radio
TAV	Tactical assistance visit
TET	Tactical Exploitation Team
TF	Task Force
TFK	TF Kandahar
TFK/BG	Task Force Kandahar Battle Group
TFK/GDA	Task Force Kandahar Ground Defence Area
TFS FOM	Task Force Stryker Freedom of Movement (corridor)
THREATWARN	Threat warning

TI	Tactical infrastructure
TIC	Troops in contact
TLAV	Tracked light armoured vehicle
TMJ	Taj Mir Jawad Network
TOC	Tactical Operations Centre
TSB	Theatre Support Base
TSE	Theatre Support Element
TTP	Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan
TTP	Tactics, techniques and procedures
TUAV	Tactical unmanned aerial vehicle
UAV	Unmanned aerial vehicle
UGS	Unattended ground sensors
UIP	Unified Implementation Plan
UN	United Nations
UN HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNAMA	United Nations Mission in Afghanistan
UNAMIR	United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda
UNDP-ELECT	United Nations Development Program–Enhanced Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow
UNHCR	United Nations Commission on Human Rights
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMACA	United Nations Mine Awareness Centre
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNPA	United Nations Protected Area
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

USG	United States Government
USPI	United States Protection and Investigation
UTAMS	Unattended transient acoustic MASINT (measurement and signature intelligence) system
UXO	Unexploded ordnance
VBIED	Vehicle-borne improvised explosive device
VHF	Very high frequency
VMO	Village Medical Outreach
VR	Voter Registration
VSO	Village Stability Operations
WHO	World Health Organization
WHOPPER	Whole of Government Panjwayi Program for Enhanced Revitalization (or Reconstruction)
WMD	Weapons of mass destruction
XO	Executive Officer

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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